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Church and state

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CHURCH AND STATE.



# CHURCH AND STATE ;

OR,

NATIONAL RELIGION  
AND CHURCH ESTABLISHMENTS,  
CONSIDERED WITH REFERENCE TO  
PRESENT CONTROVERSIES.

BY

THE REV. T. R. BIRKS,

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*With a Preface*

BY

THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

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TO THE  
LORDS SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL,  
TO THE  
MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,  
AND THE  
ELECTORS OF OUR CHRISTIAN EMPIRE,

*The following Pages*

ARE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY

THE AUTHOR.

---

PSALM ii. 10-12.

‘BE WISE NOW THEREFORE, O YE KINGS; BE INSTRUCTED, YE JUDGES  
OF THE EARTH. SERVE THE LORD WITH FEAR, AND REJOICE WITH  
TREMBLING. KISS THE SON, LEST HE BE ANGRY, AND YE PERISH FROM  
THE WAY....BLESSED ARE ALL THEY THAT PUT THEIR TRUST IN HIM.’



## PREFACE.

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THE subject of this volume, to which I have been requested by the eloquent and accomplished author to prefix some prefatory words, is acquiring additional importance in every successive year as the World approaches to its end. It is no other than this,—Is it, or is it not, the will of Almighty God that He, Who is the Eternal Word of God, and Who in the fulness of time took our Nature and became Man, and died for us on the cross, and raised Himself from the dead, and ascended in the clouds of heaven and sat down at the right hand of God, is to be acknowledged by States and Nations as King of kings, and Lord of lords? Is it, or is it not true, that all kings must fall down before Him,

and that all nations must do Him service? (Ps. lxxii. 12.) Did not the Psalmist give utterance to the Divine will, when He said, 'Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye that are judges of the earth; kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the right way when His wrath is kindled but a little.' (Ps. ii. 10, 12.) Did not Christ Himself, when He was risen from the dead, proclaim His own universal supremacy, and claim the allegiance and homage of all Nations, when He said, 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth' (Matt. xxviii. 18); and did not the Apostle utter a Divine decree in the words, 'He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet?' (1 Cor. xvi. 15.) Did not the beloved disciple and evangelist St. John reveal the future recognition of Christ's universal supremacy, after the overthrow of all the hostile powers which will rise up in rebellion against it, when He said, 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ?' (Rev. xi. 15.)

These questions are addressing themselves to the minds of all thoughtful persons in private meditation, and in public life. They are becoming the great topics of public deliberation and



debate in Cabinets and in Senates ; and the welfare of Nations, and the happiness, present and future, temporal and eternal, of individuals, depends on a right solution of them. No one can look around and survey the condition of Great Britain and Ireland, and contemplate the great interests at stake which are now pending on that solution, without acknowledging their momentous gravity and solemn importance. And this impression is much strengthened and deepened, when we extend our view. On the Continent of Europe we see two antagonistic forces, hostile to each other, and exasperating one another by violent action and re-action, and yet combining together against Christianity by denying the supremacy of Christ. The spirit of Unbelief is acquiring new strength from various causes, especially from the weakening of the hold of the Church of Rome on the Reason, the Conscience, and the Will of a large part of the community of Continental nations, which, not being acquainted with any other form of religion than that of Rome, are lapsing from Romanism into Infidelity ; and the Church of Rome is meditating a new aggression on the supremacy of Christ, by claiming personal Infallibility for the Roman Pontiff in the

approaching Council which is summoned to meet at Rome on December 8, in the present year, and which will probably exercise very powerful influence, not only on the religious opinion, but on the social welfare, of Europe.

These two forms of Antichristianism are now leagued together in a formidable confederacy against National Churches, especially against the National Churches of England and Ireland, which have hitherto been the strongest bulwarks of Scriptural Truth, and therefore, of religious liberty. This strange combination of discordant forces is threatening to destroy the peace of society and the prosperity of states, and to weaken the foundation of thrones; which cannot rest on any other secure foundation than that on which God has placed them, — obedience to His will and Word proclaiming the sovereignty of Christ.

Of all European nations, England appears to be the one which is specially designed by Him to be a faithful witness to this fundamental principle of true Religion and Polity.

She is now on her trial. For more than three centuries she has possessed here and in Ireland a National Church, which has been a Keeper and Witness of God's Truth, as revealed in Holy

Scripture, and which, in obedience to His Will, as therein declared, has been a Teacher of loyalty to the Throne, and of submission to the Law of the land, and a Guardian of Order and of Peace.

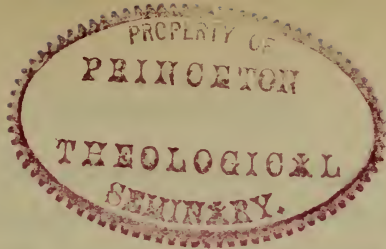
But if its foundations are now to be weakened by legislative enactments ; if the Church of Ireland and England is no longer to be maintained as a national institution, if its rights are to be sacrificed, its property confiscated, and its affections alienated ; then, it is much to be feared that the power of those two anti-national and anti-monarchical forces will have been much aggrandized, and eventually the English Monarchy and Nation will be left feeble and defenceless, shorn of their true dignity and strength. Forsaken by God, whom they will have deserted, and without whose blessing nothing can prosper, they will be exposed to the furious storm of a ruthless and godless Conspiracy, and become the victims of social anarchy and revolutionary confusion.

Such statements and reasonings as are contained in the present volume may, by God's blessing, enable England to be faithful to her trust. The prayers of all loyal hearts are with her ; and whatever may be the result, in this world, of the

efforts of those religious patriots, who are now labouring and praying that she may enjoy the highest of all earthly privileges, that of being a Christian Nation, maintaining God's truth and promoting His glory by national acts,—this is certain, that they cannot fail of a reward hereafter, and that even the violence of the struggle, which they are encountering for that truth, will enhance the glory of that Victory which will eventually be achieved for His Church on earth, and for all her faithful members, by the Divine Omnipotence of CHRIST.

C. LINCOLN.

*Riseholm, Lincoln,  
8th May, 1869.*



## PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR.

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THE substance of the present work is the result of careful study of the Word of God on the great question of national duty, from thirty to forty years ago. The convictions then formed, reversing earlier opinions, once received on trust from others, have grown in strength by continual meditation on the Scriptures, and on the events of history, down to the present day. Many of the leading thoughts were published, twenty-five years ago, in a work called 'The Christian State.' This has been long out of print, and several friends have expressed a wish for its republication in a form more adapted to the present time.

I have felt it my duty to comply with this request. But in so doing, the whole has been re-written, so as to constitute a new work. The parts which are substantially retained have been condensed, and the later chapters are almost entirely new, where main principles unfolded in the work are applied to the great national questions of the present day. I have written the whole under a deep sense of responsibility to God. Our country is now

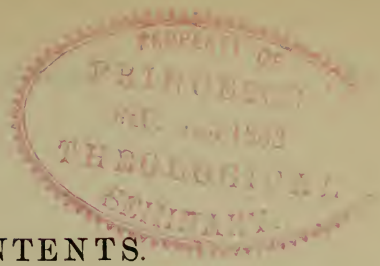
passing through a great moral crisis, not unlike that of the Jewish nation in the days of our Lord and his Apostles. I believe firmly, and without doubt, that ignorance or denial of the truths here enforced is betraying our country into a course of policy, criminal in the sight of God, and sure to issue, without repentance, in national judgments and moral ruin. May it please God, before it is too late, to open the eyes of those who are now deceived!

The main drift of the whole volume is summed up in a few weighty words of preface, which the Bishop of Lincoln has kindly written at my request. I prize them doubly, not only as a personal kindness, and from deep regard to his high office in our National Church, but from the special honour due to him for his public labours as a thoughtful and profound expositor of the Word of God. The question here opened will never lose its importance. Three standards are mustering their followers,—Superstition, represented by Ultramontane Popery; Unbelief, represented by the Positive Philosophy, the worship of man and his powers of self-development; and the Catholic, Apostolic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christianity of the Reformation. The final decision will be with the King of kings in the promised day of His glorious Advent.

T. R. BIRKS.

*Cambridge, May 9, 1869.*





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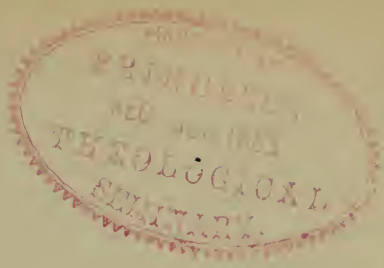
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# CHURCH AND STATE.

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## INTRODUCTION.

WHAT are the duties of kings, princes, and rulers, in reference to the interests of religion? What are the relations which ought to subsist between earthly States and Kingdoms and the Visible Church of Christ? Ought they to keep apart from each other in jealous isolation, or to enter into the closest union, as kindred ordinances of God, derived from a common source, and aiming together at the highest welfare of mankind?

To these questions widely different answers have been given, even by sincere and devout Christians. The corruptions which have defiled the Church, and the worldly spirit which has prevailed among Christian statesmen and rulers, have obscured the whole field of vision, and produced, even among thoughtful men, a discord almost incurable. Facts have been confounded with moral laws, and duties have been buried under doubts, difficulties, and objections, till the light itself has become darkness, and the nations of Christendom are in danger of sinking into a total apostasy from the obedience of faith, with no united warning from the true Church of Christ, to

recover them from their downward course, and guide their feet into the way of peace.

The difficulty of the subject arises, in part, from the indirect manner in which this aspect of Christian truth has been revealed. When our Saviour appeared, Israel, the one chosen people, were on the eve of their long rejection from the covenant of God. All beside were in heathen darkness. No king or sovereign was numbered among the disciples of Christ when the canon of Scripture was closed. The Gospel had to work its way upward through ages of mockery and persecution, till it took possession of the imperial throne. The sin and unbelief of the Jews, and the opening of a new dispensation, obscured the connexion between the Christian Church and the precepts and examples of the Old Testament. Simple maxims of duty towards heathen rulers could not resolve the questions that must inevitably arise, when kings and princes obey the Gospel, and take their place within the Church of Christ. The claims and rights of Church rulers, of civil governors, and of the private Christian, would then need to be reconciled to each other. The word of God contains all the materials for a true decision on these subjects. But they do not lie on the surface, and patient thought is needful before we can see them in a true light, or unfold their relations to each other, and to the whole compass of Christian doctrine. In ages of superstition authority may be abused, so as to stifle the voice of conscience, and destroy the liberties of Christian men; while conscience itself may be made the plea, in times of anarchy and self-will, for the indulgence of a proud and rebellious spirit, and for a

contemptuous disregard of the authorities, both in Church and State, which God himself has ordained.

The perilous times of the last days, announced long ago by the lips of Apostles, have now set in. The close of the last century witnessed what the world had never seen before, a nation of civilised atheists and learned apostates, who bade open defiance to the God of heaven. When this hideous portent appeared, its dark shadows spread even into holy ground. A negative theory of national duty, almost unknown before, found apologists and advocates within the bosom of the Christian Church. States were counselled to have nothing whatever to do, in their public character, with the worship of God and the profession of the faith of Christ. The alliance of Church and State, in former ages, was maintained to be the source of countless evils, and their entire separation an essential and imperative law of Christian duty. These views have been sometimes upheld by serious argument. But a more painful spectacle has been often witnessed, when mere novices in the faith have discarded, with self-complacent pride, the consenting judgment of all the great lights of the Church in earlier days, and the mushrooms of a night have exalted themselves proudly against the cedars of Lebanon.

The object of this work will be to deduce, from the testimony of Scripture and the first principles of the Christian faith, those laws of duty which are binding on civil rulers, in connexion with the Visible Church and progress of the Gospel. The ideal may seem hopeless of attainment in an age of license, disguising itself under the name of liberality. But we ought not on this account to

lower the standard of duty, or to bear false witness to rulers and parliaments concerning their solemn obligation to the King of kings. May He who is the Fountain of all wisdom, and the Prince of the kings of the earth, enable His servants, in these days, to be faithful to their Lord and His truth, so that we may gain some glimpses, like openings of deep blue in a stormy sky, of the glory and the grandeur of His eternal kingdom.

The subject includes two main branches, the general obligation of National Religion, and the Scriptural warrant for that direct sanction and patronage of the Visible Church by the Civil Ruler, which constitutes the Union of Church and State, or a National Establishment of the Church of Christ.

# PART I.

## NATIONAL RELIGION.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE TRUE IDEA OF NATIONAL RELIGION.

THE maxims on which the duty of National Religion is based, in its true and Scriptural idea, may be stated in the following propositions :—

1. All kings, princes, and civil rulers, to whom the Gospel of Christ has been made known, are bound to embrace it with their whole heart, and to submit themselves, with all their royal or princely power, to the supreme authority of the Son of God. They are bound to rule in the fear of God, to avow their allegiance to Christ, and to do all things to the glory of their Lord and Master in heaven.

2. They ought, therefore, to base their laws on the revealed laws of God, to execute them with a direct appeal to His authority, to own themselves His servants, and to honour Him with acts of public worship, in prayer, praise, adoration, and thanksgiving.

3. Their duty, as God's ministers for the good of the people, has a wider range than the security of life and property by armed force, or the fear of punishment. They are bound to honour moral excellence above worldly

riches, to care for the wants of the soul more than those of the body, and to seek that truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among their people to all generations.

4. The Visible Church is ordained by Christ for the spread of Divine truth, that families, states, and kingdoms, may be made obedient to His Gospel, and learn and do His will. Christian rulers, then, are bound not only to become its members, but to promote its labours of love, and to give it every help in their power for its growth and increase.

5. Rulers are bound, therefore, in their laws, to recognise the Visible Church in its corporate existence, its social worth, and divine calling; to encourage, and also regulate, the offerings of its members; to help its efforts for the instruction of all Christian people, and to honour its doctrines and laws in the whole constitution of the State.

6. When the Church has been rent with schisms, and corrupted by false doctrines and immoral practices, other duties will devolve on Christian rulers. Their office requires them to discern between saving truth and dangerous error, to resist sectarian bigotry and unbelieving indifference, to honour every part of the Church in proportion to its religious soundness and power of confirming social benefit, to repress grosser evils, and encourage all things pure, lovely, and of good report.

7. These duties of the Christian ruler are confirmed by the testimony of Scripture, and are in full harmony with the true rights of conscience and the precepts and lessons of the Gospel. But while it is the duty of every



Christian to aim at this high standard in every act of political life, its full attainment is reserved for the promised time of the restitution of all things, when the earth shall be full of the glory of the Lord.

First, Civil Rulers, whatever the form of government may be, are bound to hear and obey the Gospel. Their high office does not free them from this universal duty, but only lays them under a double obligation. The large trust they have received adds new force and emphasis to the Divine command, and makes them guiltier than others when they neglect or disobey the message of heaven. They are bound to welcome the heavenly gift with their whole hearts, and to submit themselves wholly to the righteous sceptre of the risen Son of God.

The voice of the Scriptures on this subject is decisive and clear. He that believeth not hath made God a liar, and is condemned already in the sight of heaven. The Gospel, by the commandment of the everlasting God, is to be made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. There is here, then, no place for exceptions. In every case, those who despise or neglect the Gospel, when once fully made known to them, are guilty of rebellion against the God of heaven.

This great duty of rulers, however plain in the word of God, has often been obscured in the minds of many Christians. One reason is the spirit of unbelief, which does not own the moral evidence of revealed truth, nor admit that, when clearly made known, its rejection must arise chiefly from a moral cause. Another reason of this darkness is the divisions of the Church, and the conflict of opinion among those who appeal to Scripture as their

guide. But these excuses, however plausible to the careless, will not endure the scrutiny of the Supreme Judge. His word, in the main doctrines of faith and lessons of duty it reveals, is clear and plain. The strifes of Christians have a dangerous tendency, it is true, to obscure the authority of the whole message. But to account it wholly uncertain, because many have in part perverted and abused it, is a dishonest pretence, which will never be accepted in the great judgment-day.

Civil Rulers, then, wherever the Gospel is made known, are bound to receive and obey its message. But arguments have often been used against religious establishments, in which this great truth is forgotten or denied. Such is the objection drawn from the case of heathen rulers, and from the supposed injustice involved in the idea of a national religion.

‘If it be a right of kings and rulers,’ says Vinet, ‘to prescribe the creed and manner of worship of their subjects, and to enforce their concurrence, it must equally be the right of all kings; for they all think,—or profess to think,—their own religion to be the true. If it be the duty of kings and rulers to prescribe these things to their subjects, it is equally the duty of all kings and for the same reason.’

The whole force of this argument turns on the secret denial of a truth, which all Christians, whose consciences are not wholly blinded, must allow. The reasoning would be strong, if the personal creed of every one were a matter of moral indifference; but if every one, king or peasant, is bound to learn and receive the truth of God, then it is evidently worthless. There is an order and succession in moral



duties, no less than in the truths of science. The duty of diffusing true religion implies an earlier obligation to learn its nature and submit to its influence. If the first duty is neglected, the fulfilment of the second, which depends upon it, is impossible. If a king thinks himself bound to propagate a false religion, when his real duty is to learn the truth, and having learned it, to help in its spread, how can this delusion establish a right, or turn a sin into a duty? St. Paul was bound, after his conversion, to proclaim the Gospel of Christ. Does this prove that he was acting aright, when he persecuted the Church, and blasphemed the Lord whom he learned afterwards to worship and adore? A Christian parent is bound to train his children in the fear of God. Does this prove that an atheist fulfils his duty, when he trains his children in irreligion and blasphemy?

Such reasoning would undermine the foundations of all morality. There never was, nor can be, a real obligation to diffuse falsehood because it is supposed to be truth, or to propagate truth while believing it to be a falsehood. But to deny, on this account, the double claim of Divine revelation, first on our hearty faith, and next on our active ministry in maintaining and diffusing it, is a contradiction to all sound reason, no less than to the plainest statements of the Word of God.

It has been urged, again, that political distinctions, founded on a difference of creed, are a necessary wrong to the less favoured party. Every attempt of rulers to promote one form of faith or worship must imply a censure on the others. It is a slur and social degradation, containing the fruitful germs of social strife and direct persecution.

Once examine this charge in the light of those truths which every Christian is bound to receive, and how groundless it must appear! All men—whether rulers, statesmen, or private persons—are bound to obey the Gospel, and to serve and honour the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. But many, perhaps, disobey the command, and are rebellious against the voice of their Maker. Hence it is inferred that rulers ought not to profess openly their faith in Christ, nor to make the spread of the Gospel an object of their rule, because it would be unjust to those who differ from them. They would do wrong to atheists, if they pay public homage to the God of Heaven. They would persecute the Deist or the Jew, and inflict on them a sore injustice, if they were to profess allegiance to Christ, and to own the Lord Jesus to be the eternal Son of God, the true fountain of their own authority. They would thus teach that it is socially better for men to believe in Christ than to disbelieve in Him, to worship God than to disown Him, and this would be iniquitous and unjust. What marvellous reasoning, to be adopted for a moment by pious and thoughtful men! Surely Christian faith must be feeble and ready to expire, when such a doctrine is not rejected at once as preposterous and absurd.

The root of these sophisms is a disguised and subtle unbelief. Opinions are viewed as everything, truth as nothing. A creed is made a kind of private property, which every one may claim to have protected, like land or merchandise, by equal laws, instead of resolving itself, in every case, into the two alternatives of truth and falsehood. It is a great evil to imagine that all truths are equally clear, or equally important; or that all intermix-

tures of falsehood are blameable or pernicious in the same degree. An ample scope must be given to conscientious inquiry, that opinions may be honestly formed, and truth be really attainable. Excessive latitude may have less danger, perhaps, than a despotism which stifles the free exercise of thought. But to sink all distinctions of truth or falsehood in the mere fact that such and such opinions are actually held is the triumph of infidelity, the reign of chaos established in the moral world.

The whole argument of alleged injustice may, with far greater truth, be reversed. Those who reject the truth of God, however ignorantly, are guilty in the sight of heaven. It cannot be just for rulers to deny God, because some of their subjects are disobeying His will. It cannot be just that they should refuse, in all their public actions, to own Him in whose hand their breath is, because there are some, among those over whom they rule, who have no religious faith whatever. It cannot be right for those who derive all their authority from the Son of God, to pay Him no public reverence and worship, because the children of those who crucified Him may still reject Him, or even count Him a deceiver. It cannot be right or just to reject the teaching of Scripture as to the true objects which men and states ought to pursue, because many are blind to every higher and nobler object than worldly ease alone. Such justice belongs only to the kingdom of darkness. It is the contrast and opposite of that eternal righteousness, whose seat is the bosom of God, whose voice is the harmony of the world.

There is one living and eternal God, by whom all things were made, and by whose good pleasure they are

sustained continually in life and being. He commanded the light to shine out of darkness, filled the earth with His bounty, and is the sole fountain of true happiness to all the creatures He has made. He created the heavens and stretched out the earth, and formed the spirit of man within him. The whole course of the world's history has been ordered by His providence, and is hastening onward to a time, when the mystery of God shall be finished, and a kingdom of peace and righteousness shall be established, to endure for ever. This all-wise God has given a revelation of His will to mankind. He has there opened a way of pardon and life, by which the guilty may be restored to His favour, the unholy to spiritual life, the sorrowful and burdened to happiness, peace, and joy. He has taught them that the present life is a time of probation, in which sinful men may prepare for a solemn judgment-day, when a great separation will be made, and their state be fixed for ever. He proclaims that their main work, in this present world, is neither to bury themselves in selfish ease, nor to amass perishable riches, but to lay hold on eternal life, and to learn and do His will, that they may be prepared to enjoy a heavenly inheritance.

Again, there are some whom He has honoured above others in the present life, and given to them influence, power, and authority, over their fellow-men. By Him kings reign, and princes decree justice. He calls them His ministers, and has given them, in His word, many precepts and examples how their power should be used for the good of their people and the glory of His Name. What is their duty with regard to these messages of the

heavenly King? Are they to thrust them wholly aside with contemptuous disregard? Are they to apply them to their own personal and private life, but to use all their public power and influence on the same principles, and for the same objects, as if no light from heaven had ever dawned on our world? Or, supposing them to be convinced that they ought to rule in the fear of God, and to be guided by His messages, are they to do this by stealth, and never to avow the maxims by which they are guided, nor to give honour to the true source of their own wisdom? Are they to believe God's messages only just so far as their subjects believe them, and to act upon them only just so far as the popular voice approves? Is it lawful for them to promote the outward wealth of their people, and to forget all that constitutes their true welfare, as if riches abused were a blessing, not a curse, to those who obtain them? Is it right for them to punish crime, and neglect the means which God himself has ordained for its prevention and removal? Their people and their kingdom, with all its power and glory, are like the small dust of the balance in the hand of the living God. In His power alone is their life. He can disappoint in a moment their most subtle schemes of policy, turn their counsel into foolishness, and lay their honour in the dust. Must they cease to tremble at His presence, or to worship before Him with holy reverence, because a few careless unbelievers are to be found within the borders of their kingdom? No, surely, this would be the course of madmen, and not of reasonable men, who have to render an account to God for their solemn trust. Faith in Christ and His word must be the mainspring of their policy, and the guide of



their counsels ; or else their counsel will be turned into foolishness, and their policy sink into a course of mad rebellion against the God of heaven. ‘Without faith it is impossible to please Him.’ The truth applies to kings and statesmen, no less than to the cottager and the peasant. His word must be their standard, His will their guide, and His glory their aim, otherwise rottenness will enter into the pillars of the state. It will be parted from the true source of life, and its moral cohesion will perish ; till it becomes a lump of brittle, incoherent clay, ready to be broken in pieces by the first stroke of divine judgment. Nations and kingdoms, which have once named the Name of Christ, must be guilty of strange folly, when they resort to the broken cisterns of worldly policy, and wholly neglect the true and only fountain of happiness and peace. Then only the kings and rulers of the earth are truly wise, when they rejoice with reverence before the Son of God ; and learn, by acts of holy worship, and open confession of the Name of Christ, to place their people under the shelter of His providence, and beneath the canopy of His protecting love.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE NATIONAL PROFESSION OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH.

THE total divorce of politics from religion is impossible. The Christian who desires it must have forgotten the meaning of words, or have renounced his allegiance to his divine Master. For political science includes the whole range of social duty towards our fellow-men, and religion, our whole duty towards God. These cannot be sundered, until men have consented to live without God in the world, and God himself has relieved them from responsibility to Him for their social conduct. This is doubly impossible. Even in the most irreligious age witnesses will be left, like Elijah and the seven thousand in Israel, to disturb the false peace of ungodly nations, and make faith in God the turning-point of national safety or ruin. Nay, though all mankind should agree with one consent to worship Mammon, and to neglect their Maker, the laws of duty are still above them and around them, a firmament of unchangeable and everlasting truth. In Creation and Providence, in the Law and the Gospel, God has joined these two spheres of thought inseparably, and man cannot put them asunder. The most worldly senators and statesmen are compelled, how-

ever reluctant, to meddle constantly with religious questions. Again, the laws of Providence do not sleep because men may shut their eyes, and refuse to see them. The judgments of God will not cease to light on ungodly nations, because a policy of religious indifference may have found public favour, and been enrolled with loud applause among the statutes of the realm. When Belshazzar and his courtiers praised the gods of silver and gold, and denied and dishonoured the God of Heaven, the handwriting of doom was already on the wall. And should the states of modern Christendom, those iron toes of the image, copy the degeneracy of the head of gold, and agree that religious truth is only a distraction in their councils, and that worldly wealth and pleasure are to be their highest aim; they cannot blot out one letter from that handwriting of eternal truth, which denounces woe on men and on nations, whenever they depart from the living God.

Rulers are bound to receive and obey the message of the Gospel. They are also bound to make a public and open confession of their faith in Christ. They may not leave their faith behind them, or hide it in a napkin, when they enter the halls of legislation, or ascend the seat of justice. The message applies to them no less than to their subjects, 'Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.'

Is the ruler an absolute monarch? The welfare of millions will depend on the decisions he forms and the



policy he may pursue. The Almighty has given him a revelation of His own will, full of lessons of social duty and political wisdom, and enriched with many examples of devout and pious kings. He is bound to search these words of God, that he may learn how to rule wisely. He must study these examples, and the blame or praise which these rulers receive, that he may learn how best to please the King of heaven, who has raised him to his post of honour, and become a full blessing to the people. When he has gained wisdom from this fountain, he ought to own the source from which he derives it, and publicly to commend it to those over whom he rules. He is a minister and servant of the living God, and is bound to know the name of his God and King. He believes, as a Christian disciple, that Jesus Christ is the Prince of princes, from whom his authority is derived, and to whom his account must be given. He must, therefore, do public reverence to the Lord of glory, and own his subjection to that holy Name, to which every knee must bow in heaven and in earth. Unless he would sin grievously against that God who has exalted him to the seat of power, religion cannot be excluded from his policy, but must be its fountain-head, its guide, its law, and its consummation. It must supply the motives of all his public conduct, the rules by which it is guided, and the final aim towards which its whole course should continually tend.

Where the supreme power is divided and diffused as in republics and constitutional monarchies, the details are altered, but the grand outline of duty is the same. Every one, from the poorest elector or meanest constable

up to the king who reigns, or the chief minister who presides in the councils of the state, is bound by the same moral law as the absolute monarch. Wherever power and influence have been received, so far must the claims of Christ extend. The wisdom which neglects to honour Him is madness. The power which refuses to own His authority is treason against the King of heaven.

Religious ostentation, it is true, is unseemly in every place, and most of all in the seats of justice or the halls of legislature, where the weighty interests at stake call for a double measure of reality and moral earnestness. No patchwork of empty phrases, or prominence given to a few dead notions in religion, can satisfy its claim on those who fill the seats of power. What is needed is the deep, constant presence of Divine truth, present and active even when least openly expressed, but never held back by false shame from utterance in the fitting season. The Christian faith of the ruler should manifest its presence, like the sun in the firmament, always by a diffused daylight; and when the occasion requires, in unclouded brightness, as when David presented the free-will offerings of his people with public and devout thanksgiving before the throne of heaven.

But profession, however public, is worthless, unless accompanied by real obedience to the revealed commands of God. Such, whether it be a command or a prophecy, is the parting legacy to the Church of the sweet Psalmist of Israel: 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.' (2 Sam. xxiii. 3.) Genuine

faith must lead to practical obedience, so that the public counsels may be guided by a constant reference to the revealed word and will of God.

These principles, motives, and maxims, which ought to guide the conduct of every Christian ruler, throw their light even into the lower region of political details. He is bound to do all things in the fear of God, and to make the glory of God his chief end. Therefore, in his public capacity, he is bound to own the God of nations, and do Him public reverence. It is the will of God that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father. The Christian ruler, then, is bound to profess publicly his allegiance to Christ, and to own that his authority is derived, not from second causes alone, and the will of the people, but from the power and grace of the risen Saviour. The fear of God and faith in Christ are the foremost qualifications for the right fulfilment of his public duties. The constitution, then, will do well and wisely, if it requires some credible sign of these qualifications before it admits to offices of especial trust. The magistrate is bound to mould all his conduct by the truths of God's Word. Hence he ought to care more for the morals of the people than for their worldly wealth, for their souls than for their bodies, for their religious welfare than merely for their physical ease and comfort. He must disown the maxim, as a delusive falsehood, that a man's life consists in the abundance of his possessions, and must never dare to legislate with a silent assumption of its truth. He is a minister of God for good. The nature of the true good, revealed or defined in the Scriptures, should thus be

taken for the measure and rule of all his duties, and his conduct be guided by the examples of kingly righteousness which they set before him. He ought not, indeed, to stretch his office beyond the limits which the Word of God assigns. But he is equally bound to abdicate none of the functions which that Word recognises in righteous kings, out of deference to theories born in an age of declining faith and decaying convictions. His duty must be learned from no mere human fancies or popular watchwords of the day, but from those Divine examples which go back to Moses and David, and from those prophecies which look forward to a coming age, when all princes shall sing with gladness in the ways of the Lord. Once let this principle be traced to its certain results, and the contrast of civil and religious will almost disappear. Every religious truth will exercise a guiding power throughout the whole range of social life ; and every civil action and custom be a corollary, either immediate or more remote, from the great truths and doctrines of the Christian faith.

The Ruler, then, must renounce his Christianity before he can consent to be, in the words of Baxter, 'a kind of secular animal, to care only for the things of the body.' He cannot serve God and Mammon, nor consent to mind only earthly things, and still do all to the glory of God. No glory can be rendered to Him by a national constitution, where His holy Name is not allowed to enter, and His word is never consulted, and has no acknowledged place ; where the scales are weighted so heavily with sugar, and corn, and bales of merchandise, that the welfare of millions of souls is dust in the

balance, and not allowed to weigh one feather in the public counsels. From such a base and fatal policy, and the principles which lead to it, may God in His mercy deliver our favoured land !

But religious truth, if it is to influence the counsels of the State, must have a definite source, and claim authority in some clear, intelligible form. Loose, floating traditions can obtain no such deep and lasting power as is needed for so great a work. That source is the Holy Scriptures. The Almighty has made known His will, for thousands of years, by prophets and apostles, and by the lips of His only-begotten Son. These messages have been recorded for the lasting guidance of the whole Church of Christ. Rulers, as God's ministers, owe Him public reverence, and here only they can learn to worship Him aright. As His ministers for good to the people, they need a clear discernment of man's true welfare, and the means by which it may be secured ; and here only such wisdom, in all its fulness, can be found. They have to guide the vessel of the State amidst the currents of time ; and here only can they learn the general course of Divine Providence, the moral changes of each successive age, and the great issues of judgment and mercy, which are in prospect before them. Their office is an earthly reflexion of the Divine glory. It needs, in every part, Divine wisdom to fulfil it aright ; and such wisdom can only be found, in its purity and fulness, in the lively oracles of God. Their duty, then, is to resort to it continually, and to draw light, as with golden urns, from this pure fountain of heavenly light and everlasting truth.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

THERE was a time when the duty of rulers to maintain and propagate the faith was received, as an evident truth, almost by every Christian. It was even stretched beyond its just limits, and was often held to include the further obligation of putting down all false doctrine by the civil sword. The words of the parable, 'Compel them to come in,' and the example of Jewish kings, were thought a basis firm enough to support a whole theory of active persecution.

The current of thought has now changed, and runs strongly in an opposite direction. A view of the duty of rulers, then unknown, or else denounced as a manifest impiety, has obtained the zealous support of many Christians. To avoid those evils of religious persecution, on which experience has thrown so clear a light, they would make private conscience absolute and supreme, and thus deny princes and rulers any province whatever in the things of God.

Two passages of Scripture alone are usually alleged as the direct basis of this modern theory. The first is our Lord's answer to Pilate, 'My kingdom is not of this

world ;' and the second, His reply to the Pharisees on the question of tribute, 'Render unto Cæsar the things of Cæsar, and unto God the things of God.' The doctrine, which would wholly divorce religion from politics, is thought by many pious men, to be established in these two passages on a basis which cannot be overthrown.

The kingdom of Christ, it is argued from the answer to Pilate, is not of this world. But all earthly kingdoms, and all religious establishments, as part and parcel of their civil constitution, are of this world. Hence all such establishments, and all secular patronage of the Gospel, are said to be opposed, in their own nature, to a fundamental law of the kingdom of Christ.

Two further reasons have been alleged, from the context, to strengthen this argument. The first of these, in Archbishop Whately's *Kingdom of Christ*, is drawn from the supposed impressions of Pilate himself. He must have understood that our Lord meant to disclaim all temporal power both for Himself and His followers ; and hence this must be His real meaning, unless we charge the Holy One with equivocation and deceit. The other argument, of Dr. Wardlaw, is meant to remove an objection drawn from the divine sanction given to the Jewish theocracy. The words, 'Now is my kingdom not from hence,' are held to imply a contrast between the past and future character of the kingdom of God. Under the law of Moses it might allow a certain intermixture of secular elements ; but *now*, under the Gospel, it is to be purely spiritual, unworldly, and divine.

Let us first examine the Archbishop's reasoning. 'Much ingenuity,' he says, 'has been wasted in discovering

possible meanings for the words of our Lord. But their sense must be quite plain to any candid inquirer. Our Saviour was on His trial for treason before the Roman governor. To this charge Pilate understood Him to plead not guilty. He must therefore have conceived Him to renounce all secular coercion, all forcible measures in behalf of His religion. Any other meaning would have been a fraudulent evasion. The Jews themselves expected a Messiah with *both* temporal and superior authority, a kingdom both of this world and the next. Any one claiming to be such a king would be an opponent of the Roman government. It was the assumption of temporal power which threatened danger to the Romans. Of this He was accused, and distinctly denied it. No words could more strongly disclaim, for Himself, and His followers, as such, every kind of secular empire. He could not mean to be understood that His kingdom was not only of this world, but of the next also.

‘What our Lord disclaimed for Himself, He must also have disclaimed for His followers. It mattered not to the Roman government whether it were He or they who should revolt against Cæsar, and set up a rival kingdom. The governor could not suppose Him to disclaim for His followers all resort to secular coercion in religious matters, only until they should have strength to employ it effectually; and all political monopoly, only until they could maintain it by a strong hand. To maintain, therefore, the right and duty of the Christian ruler to use secular power for the advancement of the Gospel is really to ascribe double dealing and hypocrisy to our blessed Lord, in the answer which He gave to Pilate’s inquiry.’



There are two fatal errors in this reasoning, which may well cause us to wonder at the confident tone with which it has been advanced. It ascribes views to Pilate which it is certain he never held, and two questions of moral duty, totally distinct in their own nature, are strangely confounded together.

Our blessed Lord, it is clear, was accused of sedition and treason, 'We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ the King.' On this charge Pilate questioned Him, and then pronounced Him not guilty. So far all Christians are agreed. But all beyond this, in the above reasoning, is the speculation of a theorist, who has never considered closely the real circumstances, or the true impressions, of the Roman governor. Did Pilate foresee the future spread and permanence of the Christian religion? Did he seek a pledge for the peaceable conduct of our Lord's disciples in future years towards later emperors? Did he put the delicate question, whether those followers, in later times, might claim secular empire, *as such*, or only in some other capacity? Did he expect that the Roman Cæsar himself would turn Christian, and catechise our Lord whether, in that case, He would not forbid him to use the imperial power in propagating the faith? All this the argument silently assumes, and yet nothing can be conceived more remote from the real truth.

The real state of the case is plain to every simple mind, not biassed by modern theories. Pilate was no logician of the nineteenth century, speculating on the relations of Church and State, and on the proper use of coercive power by Christian rulers. He was a heathen

Roman, who had to decide a simple question of life and death. He knew nothing of our Lord's divinity and resurrection, and never dreamed that Roman Cæsars would learn, in future years, to worship and adore this Nazarene. He wanted to know whether He had really stirred up the people to sedition, or would be likely to do so if His life were spared. When convinced on this point, he is satisfied, and wishes to hear no more. A higher truth is announced to him, but he answers with contemptuous indifference, 'What is truth?' and seeks only to quiet the murmurs and stay the malice of the people, that he may not imbrue his hands in innocent blood. Afterwards, when the real charge escapes from the lips of the priests, a deeper suspicion flashes across his mind for a moment, and he puts the question to our Lord, 'Whence art thou?' He could not possibly, then, conceive our Lord to have defined, for his special benefit, the duty of those Christian rulers, who should own Him, in after times, to be God incarnate, the Lord of lords, and King of kings.

But, besides the total misconception of Pilate's real state of mind, there is a second error no less fatal to the argument. Two questions of moral duty, wholly distinct, are confounded together. The first is the duty of private Christians towards heathen rulers. The second is the duty of Christian rulers towards their subjects, whether Christians or heathens. No advocate of national religion will maintain that Christianity sanctifies rebellion, or that orthodoxy is a warrant for treason and seditious violence against unbelieving sovereigns. Now this is the only question to which the words of Pilate could possibly

apply, even when turned into a general principle, such as Pilate never cared for. The question is quite distinct, What would be the duty of Cæsar himself, when once become a convert and disciple of Christ? To substitute one of these questions silently for the other, implies a great confusion of thought. The second question was never mooted before Pilate. He would doubtless have scoffed at the idea of such a conversion as utterly absurd. But he would have been still more amazed, if he were told that his acquittal of our Lord from the charge of sedition had laid down a law of public duty to those unborn emperors, and forbade them to use their authority to help on the faith of Christ, when they had come to own this despised Nazarene for their own Lord and Master in heaven.

The other argument, in Dr. Wardlaw's *Lectures on Establishments*, rests on the assumption that the word 'now,' in our Lord's answer, is an adverb of time. But this is plainly untrue. The clause is a conclusion and logical inference from the previous statement,—'If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants have fought.' This is the more exact version, and plainly alludes to Peter's attempt at a rescue, and His own prohibition. 'But they have not fought, therefore is my kingdom not from hence.' If there were another particle, *οὕν, therefore*, to express the inference, the word *now* might be naturally referred to *time*. But instead of this, it is followed by a particle of contrast. Its exact meaning, then, is plainly, 'as the case now stands.' The absence of resistance by His disciples, when He was betrayed by Judas into the

hands of the priests, was a proof that His kingdom was not from this world, but was to be established by the immediate hand of God.

But the context is no less decisive against this novel exposition. For what, in this case, must the words imply? First, that the Jewish theocracy had its origin from this world, and this is utterly untrue. It was a direct ordinance of the God of heaven. Next, that our Saviour here claims to have been the king of the Jews ever since the days of Moses. This would have been a plain assertion of His divinity, and Pilate needed not then to wait for the new accusation of the priests, in order to put the question to his prisoner, 'Whence art thou?' Thirdly, we must then suppose that our Lord repelled a charge of sedition before the Roman governor by claiming to be the king of two dispensations, one of them past, the other still to come, and then defining the contrast between them. He would thus have offered to an unbelieving Gentile the strong meat of higher truths than His apostles, at that time, were prepared to receive. Tried by every test, the new interpretation is baseless and unreasonable.

The way is now open to inquire into the true scope of these words, and the light which they throw on the natural and moral laws of the kingdom of Christ. I will first offer a direct paraphrase, and then consider the bearing of the passage on the office of Christian rulers, and on the true claim of the Gospel upon earthly kings.

Our Lord was brought before Pilate under a false charge of seditious conduct. The first question of the governor, 'Art thou the king of the Jews?' might either

have arisen from some faint suspicion of the truth, like that of Nicodemus; or be only an official inquiry, to learn whether the prisoner himself owned the accusation of the elders to be just. The answering question is meant to elicit the real motive of the inquiry from Pilate's own lips: 'Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?' Is it from sincere doubt in thy own mind, the effect of my reported miracles, or only as a magistrate, that this inquiry is made? The answer of Pilate disclaims everything beyond a dry official duty: 'Am I a Jew? thine own people and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?' Can it be supposed that I trouble myself with Jewish superstitions, or their enthusiastic follies about a king Messiah, or that I have any thought of becoming thy disciple? I sit here as a magistrate to try a case of alleged sedition. The chief priests accuse thee of stirring up the people to rebellion. Is it true, or not true? What hast thou done?

Pilate, it is now plain from his own lips, is no inquirer after truth. Our Lord makes answer accordingly. He implies, without asserting openly, that He is indeed a king, and only clears Himself from the charge of having stirred up sedition: 'My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants have fought, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.' The kingdom I claim does not derive its source from human policy, nor depend for its attainment on the efforts of a popular party, or on the weapons of worldly ambition. It is the direct gift of Heaven, assured to me by the



promise of God. If it were my hope to attain it by acts of rebellion, my disciples would have fought against the Jews when they came to take me prisoner by violence. But since I forbade them to resist, and yielded myself without a struggle to my enemies, it is clear that my kingdom, if I be a king, must have some higher source, and can be mine only by supernatural aid and the direct gift of Heaven.

The defence from the charge of sedition is complete, but Pilate cannot conceal his perplexity at this strange answer. A prisoner brought before him as a criminal, with the shouts of a furious populace ringing in his ears, whose life is that moment in the governor's hands, speaks of himself as a king; so sure of His kingdom that He renounces all active aid from His own friends, and suffers His enemies to lead Him away, with curses and execrations, to prison and to death. He cannot forbear to ask whether he has heard and understood Him aright. 'Pilate said unto Him, Art thou a king then?' The reply of our Lord is a full and open confession of the truth, even though it might seem to His questioner the madness of folly: 'Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth heareth my voice.' Your very question, put to a prisoner whose life is in your hands, proves a secret whisper in your conscience, which tells you that I am higher and nobler than my outward appearance would lead you to suppose. My words and actions are those of a king whose glory is veiled for a season, else you could never have been led to make this new inquiry.

However scorers may deride, I do avow myself, amidst all my seeming helplessness and danger, to be really a king. I came into the world for this very object, to announce, amidst scorn and mockery, the approach of that kingdom which my Father has given me, and to call sinners to repent, and prepare for the day when this kingdom will be revealed. The great truth that this kingdom is at hand has been the substance of my message; and every one who loves the truth will obey the warning, and will own me also for the true and eternal King.

Such is the clear and simple meaning of our Lord's reply. The Apostle so expounds it when he speaks of this good confession, and reminds us that its truth is to be shown at the appearing of the Lord Jesus, when He will, in due time, be glorified by His heavenly Father, the Lord of lords, and King of kings. Such thoughts, however, lie beyond the narrow range of Pilate's vision, and he turns away with contemptuous unconcern. 'Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?' But however careless about this prisoner's preposterous claim to royalty, he is clear now that the charge of sedition is groundless. He looks on him as a strange enthusiast and madman, but one whose madness is quite harmless; for 'when he had said this, he went out and said to the Jews, I find in him no fault at all.' He cared nothing about the claim to some Utopian kingdom which was to come down from heaven: it was enough that there had been no actual sedition against the Roman Emperor. But still some deeper suspicions could not be wholly suppressed. When he hears presently the real charge of the Jews, 'By our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God,' his dislike to

surrender an innocent victim to the hatred of the priests is aggravated by a sense of awe and wonder, which he can no longer conceal, at the mysterious and unknown dignity of the Man of sorrows.

Now there are, doubtless, worldly corruptions of the faith, which are wholly opposed to the spirit of this passage. Since the kingdom of Christ, in all its stages, has a heavenly origin, the children of that kingdom, in all their desires for its advancement, should ever be mindful of its true dignity. This daughter of heaven may not plead, like a mendicant, for the favour of earthly Powers, as if she rested on their support, and must sink and perish when their smiles are withdrawn. The kingdom which is from heaven may welcome earthly princes into its bosom, but only as subjects and disciples of Christ, the heavenly King. Their offerings can be accepted, only when they present them in the moral attitude of obedient servants. Should the thank-offerings of the sincere disciple ever be exchanged for bribes, tendered by those who are of no faith, to gain control over a powerful State engine, the Church of Christ will then be bound, by zeal for the honour of her Lord, to reject the treacherous gift, and to say, as Peter said to Simon, ‘Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God can be purchased with money.’ A religion born of heaven can never be bribed to work, like a slave, in the treadmill of secular ambition.

Again, since the disciples of our Lord were forbidden to use the sword against the Roman soldiers, we learn that the Christian faith condemns every form of seditious violence. Neither the numbers of the discontented, nor



their acceptance of a purer faith than their rulers, can justify rebellion against the powers ordained of God. And further, since the Gospel is so pure in its source, and is assured of its final triumph, kings and rulers, while they yield to its claims, and seek to advance its progress, ought ever to be mindful of its true dignity, and see that all their attempts to befriend its cause are in harmony with the great truths and precepts it proclaims to the world. To multiply slaves or hypocrites does not advance the kingdom of Christ. The punishment of evildoers, and the praise of them that do well, must have place within the visible Church, as in the heathen world, and extend to every form of good and evil in the actions of men. But the punishment of religious offences, where the conscience has not first been awakened and enlightened, will make slaves and hypocrites, not believers; and rewards and privileges offered to the bare profession even of a true faith, may prove only a bounty on hypocrisy, mockery, and profaneness. That kingdom, which has its source in heaven, disdains to allure disciples by motives of servile fear, or by mercenary offers of worldly greatness. Its own final victory is secure by the covenant of God. Its strength is drawn from on high. Princes and subjects alike are bound to devote themselves to its cause; but their chief anxiety must be to strive lawfully, and to use those motives and influences alone, which the Gospel recognises, and which their Lord himself will approve.

These words of our Lord, then, may justly be applied to reprove abuses, which have often been connected with religious establishments. But instead of condemning all national religion, and proving that the duty of the magis-

trate is to be neutral in all matters of faith, they prove the exact reverse, and condemn the maxim of religious neutrality as a virtual denial of the Christian faith.

What is the exact force of the words, 'My kingdom is not of this world?' They assign no limit to the time when that kingdom would be manifested, the subjects who are to belong to it, or the place where it is revealed. They announce simply its source and origin from above.

The Jews, it has been said, expected a kingdom *both* of this world and of the next, for the great mass of the people believed in a future state. Here a critical error is the basis of a laboured argument. Where the present world or age is contrasted with the world to come, a different word is used. The world here is no period of time, present or future, but that corrupt constitution of earthly things, in which the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, prevail and bear sway.

Again, the words are not designed to limit the theatre of Christ's kingdom, or to exclude from it this lower world. He reigns alike over men on earth and over angels in heaven. His kingdom is in the world, and over it, so long as the world shall endure. The key is in the clause that follows—'Now is my kingdom not *from hence*.' The two phrases explain each other. Our Lord states in both of them the origin of His kingdom. It is not from this world, but from above. He speaks of Himself elsewhere in the same words: 'Ye are from beneath, I am from above: ye are of this world, I am not of this world.' The kingdom shares in the prerogative of the King. It is manifested here below, but its source and origin is heavenly and Divine.

There is a second error which the Archbishop has adopted, along with other popular mistakes, in his argument, that 'our Lord describes His kingly office to consist in bearing witness to the truth.' This is the office of a prophet or a philosopher, not of a king. Pilate could not fail to know that our Lord had assumed the functions of a teacher and prophet, and therefore of a professed witness to some kind of truth. His question, 'Art thou a king?' could only relate to a further claim of royal authority and judicial power. To accept the title, and strip it of the character to which alone Pilate's question referred, would have been verbal trifling, not unlikely to incense the governor, and wholly unsuited to the character of our Lord. The meaning is just the converse, that the truth He came to announce, in a world of rebels, was the certainty of His own coming kingdom. Thus St. Paul has explained it: 'And he commanded us to preach to the people, and testify that it is He who is ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead.' The offices of a prophet and of a king were wholly distinct in the mind of Pilate, in the recorded statements of our Lord himself, and in the universal judgment of mankind; and there is nothing here to justify their being confounded together. Our Lord elsewhere uses the two names or titles sixty times, and always with their natural distinctness of meaning.

The whole passage, when once freed from false glosses that have obscured it, is a clear testimony to the claims of the Gospel over earthly rulers and kings. The kingdom of Christ has not its source in this world, but He is, in Pilate's sense of the word, truly and indeed a king. All

power in heaven and earth is given to Him, and all men must either be His subjects or His enemies. This kingdom claims jurisdiction over earthly sovereigns, for He who witnessed this good confession is King of kings, and Lord of lords. Earthly rulers, then, in a special sense, and beyond others, owe allegiance to this supreme Sovereign. In this kingdom, also, neutrality is impossible. He that is not for the King is against Him, and he that gathereth not with Him scattereth abroad. The claims of the King are wide-reaching and universal over all classes of men, every province of thought, and every field of human activity. In private and in public, in the cottage and on the throne, every thought must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. No foot of neutral ground exists, or can exist, in the wide universe. This King will reign till all enemies are put under His feet; and His subjects, whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, are solemnly charged to do all things to His glory. All other rulers fulfil their office more and more perfectly as they approach nearer to this Divine standard; till their earthly kingdoms lose themselves, and are transfigured, in the dawning splendour of the Sun of righteousness.

## CHAPTER IV.

## NATIONAL LEGISLATION.

THE duty of rulers to profess openly their allegiance to Christ, and to honour and obey His word, establishes the closest connexion between political science and the revealed will of God. The kingdom of Christ, though its source is from above, is supreme over the princes of this world. It lays them under a solemn obligation to rule in His name, and according to His word, who is the Lord of lords, the Prince of the kings of the earth. Our Lord came to announce the truth to a world of rebels, that He is the true King, whom they are bound to obey, and that no thought or action, either of subjects or rulers, is exempt from His authority. This doctrine, once recognised, will mould and leaven the whole course of national legislation. Kings and princes will then feel themselves bound, in their whole policy, to deal with their subjects as immortal creatures, with hopes beyond the grave, and to frame and execute their laws with an open appeal to the authority of God. Religious truth will preside in their councils. It will govern the national jurisprudence, and the national economy, and lead to direct efforts for the religious welfare of the people.



The theory which disowns all national religion involves a double assertion ; that magistrates are bound to deal only with secular affairs, and have no province directly religious ; and that social duties, for their right discharge, require no direct confession of Divine truth. The doctrine of Scripture and sound reason is just the reverse. Nations and their rulers have duties to God himself, of public prayer, worship, and thanksgiving ; and even their duties to their subjects can only be fulfilled aright, when they render public homage to the revealed will of Heaven. The subject will resolve itself naturally into these divisions—jurisprudence, education, national economy, national worship, and the religious province of rulers, to aim directly at the spiritual welfare of the people committed to their charge.

The execution of justice is the first and simplest object of all human government. The importance of this duty, and the evils that arise from its neglect, conceal from many minds the real compass and range of kingly power. Religious establishments, in their view, interfere with the claims of social justice ; and hence they conclude hastily that national religion is pernicious, that religious neutrality and equality is the only safe course, and that kings and princes have no lawful province in the affairs of religion.

The wide prevalence of this opinion is due to various causes. Pious and benevolent men have been revolted by the cruel persecution and State hypocrisy of former days, and dread the palsy and blight of secular influences in holy things. Worldly minds would gladly escape, in their zealous political debates, from any troublesome and

unwelcome intrusion of Divine truth. Earnest and devout Christians are ready to despair of hearty allegiance to Christ in the high places of power. They think it prudent to bargain, if possible, for a bare neutrality, as their best safeguard from direct and positive mischief, and from the risk of a direct persecution of the truth of God.

There are cases, no doubt, in which a national establishment of religious truth, or of some Church which claims to be a witness for the truth, may be at variance with the claims of social justice. Destructive and pernicious errors may be propagated at the public cost, and by national authority. Even truth itself may be countenanced by means alien to its nature, when it is sought to force men into wisdom and holiness by mercenary motives, or by the hand of violence. Secondary diversities of Church government or modes of religious thought may be exalted into undue importance, while those moral distinctions, which are far more weighty, are neglected and obscured. In these cases a religious establishment will clash, more or less plainly, with the laws of social justice. The whole structure is thus brought into peril, and a moral reaction may begin. A little real injustice will form the nucleus around which there may gather a host of imaginary wrongs. These will be reinforced by the whole strength of infidelity and worldliness, and form a dangerous confederacy, able, perhaps, to subvert the very foundations of national allegiance to the name of Christ.

When this evil has arisen, as it has now arisen among ourselves, it is high time to view the truth from an opposite side. A religious establishment must be faulty when it is at variance with the true and genuine claims

of social justice. But it is no less true that social justice needs, for its security, the stay of national religion. To make its claims a warrant for the view which turns kings into 'a kind of secular animals that have the care only of men's bodies' is a strange folly. For if it be a law of eternal duty that 'he who rules over men must be just,' it is no less true that, in order to ensure this character in the ruler, he must also 'rule in the fear of God.' An imperfect measure of equity may have been attained by heathen princes where the word of God was unknown. But where the light of Revelation is given, there is no choice but to submit the conscience to its power, or to sink into moral blindness. This truth may be traced under four heads—the direct execution of justice, the sanction of oaths, the enactment of laws, and the questions that must arise from the religious faith of private Christians.

I. THE RIGHT EXECUTION OF JUSTICE needs impartiality, vigilance, firmness, and compassion. The judge must decide with authority and gravity, without the suspicion of his being swayed by selfish interests, or the fear or favour of his fellow-men.

Now the best security for impartial judgment is when the conscience of the judge is under the power of religious truth. No other motive can have so steady and powerful an influence. He should rise above the temptations of selfish interest by remembering the account he must himself render to the supreme Judge, with whom there is no respect of persons. The judges of Israel, long ago, were to be 'men fearing God, and hating covetousness.' No lower motive could be so effectual to remove the fear of man, and secure upright and impartial decisions.



To secure impartiality, injustice must be hated for its own sake, or dreaded for its consequences to the wrongdoer. The Christian revelation, when received, supplies this double motive. But men whose view is bounded by the grave, and whose morality is leavened by the atmosphere of selfishness and crime which surrounds human courts of law, cannot be impartial without a kind of miracle. This truth, which reason alone might teach us, is confirmed by the words of Scripture: 'Ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not fear the face of man, for the judgment is God's.' No lower motive, it is implied, would be likely to overcome the force of temptation, or prove an effectual barrier against injustice and oppression.

Justice, again, to be effectual for the good of the State, must be vigilant as well as impartial. The evils that arise from mere neglect and ignorance have rivalled those which flow from direct and conscious oppression. And here the need for high religious principle is still more apparent. Lower motives may lead a judge to decide equitably on a case that is forced under his eyes. His reputation may be at stake. The eyes of many are fixed upon him. Thus pride or prudence may supply the place of higher motives, and retain him in the path of duty. But vigilance in detecting crime, in succouring the oppressed, and resisting the silent encroachments of power in faithless hands, requires a virtue of a deeper kind. How few are alive to these obligations! There is a secret emphasis in the words of Solomon: 'A king that sitteth on the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes.' The eye which searches out iniquity, and

checks wrong and oppression in their very birth, is even more effectual than the sword of justice, which hews down full-grown iniquity. But then he who would fulfil this task must sit on the throne of judgment, and give himself wholly to the work of promoting justice through the land. He must not entrench himself behind official forms, and lend his ear only when crimes are forced on his notice. He must search out the cause of the poor, and his eyes be awake to discern and repress the first budding of great social evils.

How, then, may this vigilance be secured? Whence must the self-denial arise, which defies the clamour of selfish interests, and surmounts the fear of reproach in maintaining the cause of justice and truth? Only pure and undefiled religion can yield such fruits as these. The princes and statesmen who have come nearest to this high standard are those marked by a deep tone of religious feeling; and they stand out on the page of history, like stars in the darkness, to awaken a noble emulation in their successors to the end of time.

Firmness and compassion are also needed in every upright judge. Weakness and irresolution encourage crime, even when sentence is pronounced against it. A harsh and severe temper, on the other hand, seems to the vulgar to turn the law itself into an engine of cruelty, till sensitive minds are ready to side with the criminal against the law which condemns him to suffer. In either case the whole course of justice is endangered, and mischief and confusion must arise.

The best security against these evils is the hearty belief and open profession of Christian truth. For the glory

of the Gospel resides in its central doctrine, which reconciles infinite grace and spotless holiness in the mind of God. Without this light, men feign a Deity whose mercy is without holiness, or whose holiness and justice is without love. Their view of His character, whom they worship, will mould their own spirit, and leave its impress on their conduct. Judges will then be prone either to confound dignity with severity and harshness, or to mistake foolish compliance with popular evils for true benevolence. Earthly tribunals must be planted under the shadow of the cross, that mercy and peace may meet together, and righteousness and peace embrace each other, in the firm and gentle administration of human laws.

Again, justice, to be effective, must be clothed with authority. Judgments that are despised, where nothing is seen but the will, perhaps the caprice or passion, of a fellow-mortal, are only a slight barrier to the progress of crime. It is not outward suffering, in itself, that can benefit either the criminal or the public, but only that moral dread of evil which it ought to awaken. And how shall this be, where there is no reference to the supreme King? When punishments have no message to the heart, their social benefit is at an end. How can they convey such a message, if the name of God, and the voices of His word, are banished from the judgment-seat? The force of custom, the forms of law, and the current of popular opinion, may sustain the pillars of the temple of justice for a little time. But the foundation will have been undermined. The current of opinion may soon change. The forms of law, deprived of their inward life, will appear a cumbrous mockery. Lawlessness will assume the mask of

benevolence. Then, amidst the anarchy of a dissolving state, the phantom of a delusive liberty, which makes conscience omnipotent and supreme above the laws of God, will burst and disappear.

Justice, then, that it may be impartial and vigilant, compassionate and firm, and invested with wholesome authority, must be administered by those who own the authority of Divine truth. 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.' But deep faith requires an open profession. Man cannot search the heart. A credible profession is all that he can secure. Its presence, indeed, is no proof of fitness for the magistrate's office; but its absence is a clear sign of unfitness, and is therefore a just and reasonable ground of exclusion. Where the choice of inferior magistrates depends on an absolute monarch, he is bound to seek for them among those who give signs of a sincere faith in God and the great truths of religion. And when a free State commits the choice of judges and legislators to the people, but limits it by some general laws, no limitation can be more reasonable than one which requires a profession of allegiance to Christ, the true source of all authority, and faith in those truths which are the soul of justice, as well as one main part of the Christian revelation.

II. THE SACREDNESS OF AN OATH is one main element on which the whole framework of social justice depends. Even heathens have remarked that habitual perjury is one sure token of national decay. The discovery of truth is a main part of the ruler's duty in the execution of justice; and the sanction of an oath, by the consenting judgment of all ages, and the testimony of the Apostle, is

a powerful help to this discovery. 'An oath for confirmation is an end of all strife.' But three things are plainly required for their right use, a knowledge of their nature, a conviction that they are lawful and right, and a deep sense of their sacredness and binding authority. They are thus a threefold cord, not easily broken, to link the ordinances of social justice with national homage to the word and truth of God.

Oaths taken without knowledge of their meaning are virtual perjuries, a worse than idle form. When they are held to be unlawful, they will be either refused, or become an open sin. And even when they are felt to be lawful, and their meaning is understood, their power will quickly cease, unless those to whom and by whom they are administered, have a living faith in eternal things.

Every oath is at once a profession of faith and an act of worship. Thereby we own the presence of an Almighty God, to whom all secret things are known, and whose eyes observe all the thoughts and actions of men. We own, further, that He is a God of truth, who hates falsehood and iniquity, and has threatened all deliberate liars with His severe displeasure. There is further implied some faith in a future judgment, when this Holy Being will take account of His creatures, and render to all men according to their works. And thus the public administration of oaths implies a public confession of religious truths of the first importance. The lawgivers who impose them, the judges who administer them, the witnesses or officers who take them, are all guilty of a profane mockery, unless there is a real acknowledgment, on the part of the State, of the power, the watchful providence, and



the coming judgment of God. These are the deep foundations of sacred truth, on which the pillars of society need to rest.

To see the lawfulness of oaths, Christian teaching is required. There is a body of Christians who disagree from all others on this subject; and their principles, if they prevailed, would abolish the use of oaths in Christian lands. Yet it is the command of God in His law, that men, as a main part of holy worship, should swear by His name. The word of prophecy numbers it among the marks of a happier age to come, that 'he who sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth.' St. Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, solemnly appeals to God for the truth of his words, which is the essence of an oath; and also administers an oath to the Thessalonian Christians, that his epistle should be read publicly to their whole body. (1 Thess. v. 27.) He pronounces it further to be the right and natural means, in human controversies, for the ending of all strife, and that God, for this very reason, has condescended to use the form of an oath in confirming His own covenant. In the latest book of Scripture we have a glorious vision, in which the Son of God, the Angel of the Covenant, confirms by a solemn oath the near approach of the kingdom of God. But in spite of this various evidence, the words of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, and those of St. James in his Epistle, have led not a few to deny their lawfulness to Christian men. The condemnation of half-oaths of worldly honour or Pharisaic superstition, where some lower thing, as the gold of the temple, or the gift on the altar, is interposed, to conceal the solemnity of a direct appeal to the

Almighty, has been mistaken for a prohibition of that swearing by the God of truth, which His perfect law has enjoined, and which is one prophetic feature of the promised times of restitution, still to come.

Where the view which condemns all oaths as unchristian is the badge of a small sect only, it may be almost harmless. An affirmation, by those among them who fear God, will be a virtual oath, and the difference be chiefly in name. But if the principle once spreads widely, its evil results will soon appear. Judicial affirmations, stripped of their sacred character, when there is no appeal whatever to the God of truth, will sink to the level of ordinary, colloquial assertions. Every Christian, indeed, ought to speak the truth at all times, and to remember always his future account for the words of his lips. But there are few who attain constantly to this high standard. Truthfulness, where it exists, needs sometimes to be quickened and sustained by an express appeal to the presence of the Searcher of hearts. Where this fence of justice is broken down, judicial evidence will sink to the level of daily conversation; and this, too, by the same downward course, will be likely to depart more and more from the law of strict veracity; till the words of the prophet are fulfilled, and truth perishes from the lips of men.

To sustain, then, the sacredness of an oath, there needs such a knowledge of Scripture among both rulers and their people as may repel plausible misconceptions of the words of Christ by the evidence of the context, the voice of conscience, the analogy of faith, and the consenting testimony of the Law, the Prophets, and the latest mes-



sages of God. Without such knowledge, the respect for oaths will be slowly undermined. And when once this part of worship is wholly set aside by Christian nations, to which the oracles of God have been given, we may well fear that they will be abandoned, ere long, to a spirit of falsehood and delusion.

But the national maintenance of Christian faith is still more needful, where oaths are used, to keep alive a due sense of their solemn obligation. When they degenerate into superstitious forms and mere official ceremonies, they are worthless to society, and hateful to every honest and pious man. Whenever Papal absolutions can set them aside, or worldlings expound them to be forms without meaning, the joints of society are loosened, and rottenness has entered into the pillars of the State.

Now if religion is divorced from politics, and the name of God and Christ is banished from all State affairs, this consummation must inevitably follow. If oaths are not to be 'playthings' they must be realities, that is, acts of living worship to the All-seeing God. His majesty will not stoop to become a mere tool in the hands of statesmen. We may not use His name to impress the conscience of the vulgar, and extract truth from unwilling lips, and then discard it from our whole policy, and banish it, like an intruder, from every field of social thought. It is gross profaneness to turn it into a mere expletive, in order to render the coronation of a sovereign a more imposing ceremony, and then to maintain that it means nothing, and that the most solemn promise of a ruler to the God of heaven can be annulled by the capricious changes of the popular will. Where the Name of God

enters at all, it enters with all its royal prerogatives. If politics are to be severed from religion, then all oaths must be cast aside. No bonds must be allowed but those of transient expediency, and the rewards or penalties of law. Oaths can never be revered by the people at large, unless rulers and magistrates make it plain, by their conduct and professions, that they really believe in that coming judgment of a holy God, to which a public and solemn appeal is made.

The sacredness of an oath, in all ages, and in every nation, has been the foundation of the State. In Christian lands it underlies the whole framework of society, and bears up its pillars. How much is implied in this one fact! Society, unless its firmest bonds are to be turned into rottenness, must know and reverence the God of Heaven. Genuine political science includes faith in One All-seeing Eternal Spirit, whose eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good; and in a moral government, which endures throughout all ages, and will issue in solemn and public acts of righteous judgment. To keep the social edifice from ruin, the words of Christ must be received and understood, so far as to ensure the hold of these momentous truths on the general conscience. But let this first step be gained, and the rest will follow.

Once let the citizens of the State feel themselves, in every act, the subjects of a future account, the heirs of immortality; and no subtlety will prevail to separate what nature, Providence, and Divine revelation, have joined together.

III. The enactment of laws is another main part of the duty of the ruler. And here also the exclusion of religious truth must have a fatal effect.

The will of any body of men has in itself no binding authority over the conscience. The essence of tyranny consists in the will of others being made supreme and absolute, without any appeal to reason, or any higher sanction than force alone. God himself claims obedience to His laws, not because He is Almighty, but because they are 'holy, just, and good.' 'The perfection God is giveth perfection to that He doeth.' Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne. If this be true of God's commands, how much more of the laws of men. For these can only have a limited and derived authority. Man has no control over his fellow-man, unless by free consent, or by some ordinance and appointment of God. The stream cannot rise higher than its fountain. The derived authority ceases, when it sets itself above him by whom it was first given.

The authority, then, of human laws depends on two conditions. The first is, that they are ordained by those whom God, either directly or indirectly, has clothed with legislative power; and the second, that they do not contradict any higher law which God himself has given. Within these limits they are of binding obligation. Beyond them, prudence may often justify outward submission, but their hold on the conscience must entirely cease.

Whenever, then, a nation, by its rulers, rejects all open confession of God's truth, and allegiance and submission to His word, the authority of its laws must be weakened, and well-nigh destroyed. For this must be either from above or from beneath, from the ordinance of God, or the will of the people. Where the first is disclaimed, the second must be set up in its stead. Thus Spain, at this hour, after

ages of superstition and priestly rule, seems ready to renounce all Divine right in government, and to proclaim the sovereignty of the people. But this is really to place the whole State on a foundation of sand. Authority then exists no longer, but physical force alone. For who gave a majority the right to control the minority? They may coerce them, so long as they have the superior power. But if the power should pass, as it soon must do, into the hands of a minority, the right of this minority will be equally strong. Violence will then be its own warrant. It will give possession of power, and there remains no other test of rightful authority. The natural result will be a short season of lawless and tumultuous anarchy, with a swift recoil into despotism, to be maintained either by tyranny and violence, or by pandering skilfully to the passions and vices of the people. The Christian, who refuses to bow to the yoke of Christ, becomes the slave of his own lusts and passions. The State, in like manner, which disowns the authority of God, and renounces His word as the guide of its laws, must sink rapidly into the slave of every popular cry. It has no stay against the pressure from without, the clamour and madness of a capricious and excited people. It has cut from beneath it the only platform on which its feet can rest. And now it must float at the mercy of the winds, a shadow of power without the substance, a mere echo of every transient voice of the multitude, and will too often, like a guilty sorcerer, be hurried on, by the passions it has evoked, to its own destruction.

A second requisite in human laws, that they may work happily, is their agreement with the laws of God. The

derived authority may not set aside or contradict that higher authority on which its own strength depends. Where faith and conscience are nearly extinct, or the Word of God is unknown, this danger may not be apparent. The whole State may then, with little or no opposition or protest, run smoothly down the precipice together. But in most cases the calamity will assume a different form. There will always be those, in a Christian land, who own the force of the apostolic maxim, 'We ought to obey God rather than man.' No strife can be more painful than where truth and conscience, in a minority, are arrayed on one side, and a majority, with false expediency and brute violence, on the other. Such a State resembles the profligate, who gives the reins to his appetites, but cannot stifle the murmurs of an accusing conscience. It must have a fatal warfare within its own bowels. The strongest and deepest feelings of man's nature will set themselves in array against it. One of two results must follow. Successful persecution will extinguish the truth, and consign it to slow decay or sudden ruin; or else the nation must return, after sore conflicts, from its downward course, and submit its laws once more to the higher and unchanging authority of the laws of God. Neutrality can be only for a moment. The rulers, who disown the truth of God, will soon plunge into some form of direct iniquity; and the moral warfare cannot cease, till their sin is reversed, or prosperous iniquity has ripened the land for speedy judgment.

Wise laws must be founded on just views of man's nature, and adapted to the state of the people for whom they are made. But when Christian truth is excluded



from legislation, it is hard for these requisites to be attained. How can those have just views of man's nature who legislate for his bodily wants alone? If laws are to be effectual barriers against crime, mightier restraints are needed, than such principles, and a policy founded on them, can ever supply. The conscience of the criminal must be awakened. The evil act must be traced to malice in the heart, and arraigned not merely as imprudent, but as a sin against the soul itself, and God the righteous Judge. Where religious truths are set aside, obedience will soon be defamed as a slavish thing, and lawless crime be dignified with the titles of courage and freedom. When virtue has been degraded into a prudent calculation of outward gain, it will soon come to be libelled as a mean and cowardly surrender of man's natural liberty. The soul of man, even in its deepest fall, disdains to be governed by mercenary fears alone. When these are made the last appeal, the spirit rises indignantly against them. It needs to be governed by some voice, whether true or false, which at least pretends to be an echo of the voice of Heaven.

Again, knowledge of Divine truth and faith in revelation are most needful, even to adapt the laws of morality to the passing circumstances of the times. Let us consider the great fact which the Scriptures proclaim. The All-wise God has given one example of a criminal code, based on the eternal laws of duty, but applied to a particular stage of the world's history, and to a peculiar and chosen people. That age has now long passed away. Fresh aspects of truth have since been revealed, to unfold and modify those of the earlier message. Varieties of race, climate, character, and temptation, and the spirit of the

Gospel, must all be taken into account, before the precedent can become a complete guide to any Christian nation. Still the main fact is clear. Eternal lessons of national duty have once been embodied, by perfect Wisdom, in the form best suited for the good of a particular nation in a distant age. He must be proud and senseless who would legislate for any Christian State, and not inquire into the lessons of this Divine precedent. It is superstitious weakness to overlook the claims of a wise expediency, and the wide contrast between the present circumstances of Christendom and the state of mankind three thousand years ago. It would be folly to forget the contrast between the Old and the New Testament, and that forbearance and grace are the grand features of the Gospel. But still, where all study of the Jewish code is irreverently cast aside, men are guilty of despising His laws, who is the sole Fountain of all true wisdom.

IV. National religion is still further essential to the right discharge of the ruler's office as the minister of justice, from the many social questions which are created by the faith and religious zeal of private Christians.

There are many who seem to fancy that nothing is easier, if only rulers were willing, than to divorce politics entirely from religion. This is a strange error. It is easier to separate the light and heat of the sunbeam, than to dis-sever elements so closely united in the thoughts, words, and actions, of all faithful men. The boundary questions of earthly states are often hard and perplexing. But this boundary question of the moral world is far harder still, and it is impossible for it to be solved by loose declamation. To avoid collision, either the State must abdicate entirely,



or Christians be absolved from their great duty of allegiance to their Divine Lord and Master in every word and action of their daily life.

There is a narrow sphere of inward thought and secret worship, into which the State has no right, and scarcely the power, to intrude. There are actions, again, so plainly destructive of social welfare, that no disease of conscience will ever screen them from the repressive power of the civil sword. But, between these limits, there is a wide range of debateable ground, where the rights of personal liberty, and the claims of social order, overlap and interfere with each other. If the mere name of conscience is always to prevail, social life becomes anarchy, and every one must be left to do what is right in his own eyes. There is no action so evil, no sin so grievous, as not in some cases to have pleaded conscience, perhaps even honestly, in its own behalf. The power of self-deception, in fallen and sinful hearts, is almost infinite. Again, if the Ruler claims a right of control over all actions which affect the peace and welfare of the State, no act of religious faith and worship will be exempt from his interference. Every utterance of true or false doctrine, every union for worship, every exposure of error, or attempt to proselyte from one faith to another, must tend to promote, or else to hinder and disturb, the welfare of the nation. Religious duty and social influence meet, like the colours of light in the sunbeam, in every act of the true Christian. The prism of subtle logic may separate them, but in the husbandry of Providence they are inseparably combined. Their attempted divorce in legislation is like

a plan for ripening harvests by the violet rays of the sun beams alone.

Let us first suppose that rulers, aiming at neutrality, admit the claims of conscience to be absolute. What results will follow? The Christian is bound to offer public worship to God: this claim will be allowed freely. He is further bound to spread the truth and oppose error. The right to proselyte without restraint must also be allowed. He will condemn idolatry and unbelief as sin, folly, and wickedness. Whether the charges are made seriously and tenderly, or with bitter and coarse invective, conscience will be pleaded for them all. The Ruler, then, must pronounce it lawful. Passions will then be aroused, perhaps even stung to madness, and reprisals will be made. The Ruler must repress the turbulence religious zeal has caused, without presuming to decide whether the creed be true or false, the zeal perverse or laudable. It is enough that conscience has been pleaded. Others, without restraint, may rouse slumbering passion to madness. The irksome task must be his, to quell these troubles by the sword at the bidding of another's conscience, and to leave the cause of irritation unappeased. The knot will soon become more involved. Invectives, even on the side of truth, put error on its defence. Heathenism will reform its grosser abuses, and a subtle philosophy may come to its aid. Infidelity will borrow from the Gospel, and plead the rights of conscience in its turn. Heathens will denounce an upstart creed, and seek to avenge its blasphemies against the gods of their fathers. The Deist will plead for the simple and manly religion of nature, and declaim against

the dreams of superstition. Conscience is pleaded on both sides. The Ruler is neutral and cannot interfere. There is nothing left for him but to drive the combatants from his judgment-seat, and leave them to decide their quarrels as they may. But strife will grow more bitter, when the restraints of law are thus withdrawn. Thus the nation may soon degenerate into an anarchy of factions, who compel the Ruler to abdicate his office by the plea of conscience, and then tear asunder the vitals of the State.

St. Paul, again, has forbidden Christians to bring disputes with their fellow-Christians before heathen tribunals. This command they are bound to obey. Causes between Christian subjects must therefore be withdrawn from a heathen, infidel, or neutral ruler, and transferred to officers of the Church to whom the duty is assigned. When the Church is nearly co-extensive with the State, the office of the Ruler, supposing him to be neutral in religion, will thus be nearly superseded. The sceptre will drop from his feeble hands, and be transferred to the governors of the Church, over whom, on this hypothesis, he has no control.

But when so large an influence devolves on Church Rulers, and the restraints of civil law are removed by the plea of conscience, this power is almost sure to be abused. They will obtain growing wealth by the offerings, legacies, and gifts of Christian people; and, perhaps, under the name of sacred property, may appropriate a large share of the national domain. Still the Ruler is powerless to interfere. The dying sinner pleads conscience, when he devotes his goods to the Church as a ransom for his soul. The priest pleads conscience when he accepts the offering, and de-

nounces every rival claim as sacrilege. And thus the theory of neutrality, when joined with the doctrine of the inviolable claims of private conscience, leads to a mournful consummation. The nation will be rent and torn with religious anarchy, and the fury of contending factions. The supremacy, civil and religious, will be transferred to an ungoverned priesthood, and the revenues and lands of the State be alienated more and more to feed their ambition and pride. The Ruler will stand by, an idle spectator of contests in which he may not interfere, and of usurpations fenced with the plea of conscience, till his sceptre is trodden in the mire, and replaced by the crosier of a covetous and usurping priesthood.

Let us now examine the result, where the other alternative is chosen, and the Ruler, still neutral, seeks to maintain his own full prerogative. He is debarred from all cognizance of religious truth, and of its social influence and claims. The temporal peace and welfare of the State is to be his only care. What are the consequences that must now follow?

Truth, in its very nature, is active, zealous, aggressive, and intolerant of error. Its claim is one of moral supremacy. It will not accept a divided heart. Its heavenly birthright is to go forward, 'conquering and to conquer.' How, then, must it be regarded by those who look upon it from without, or with cold indifference? Every step in the course of Christian duty will appear unwise, troublesome, presumptuous, and, at last, intolerable. The cry that will greet its messengers from careless worldlings will be, 'These men that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.' Their message, when it

comes with power, and is met with popular dislike, will occasion strife and tumult. To those who view it from without, it will seem the guilty cause of these troubles. A prudent ruler may be loth to interfere. But when passion is aroused by the new creed, he will, to be impartial, punish its more violent opposers, and forbid its further publication. Its enemies will see their true policy. They will suspend their acts of lawless violence, and ply their insinuations with double zeal against the supposed disturbers of public peace. The disciples of truth will feel her claims paramount to those of any earthly power. Even the more temperate will feel bound to obey God rather than man. The rash and hasty will exult in bidding defiance to restraints injurious and unlawful, as they think, imposed on the messengers of truth by ungodly rulers. Their opposition will sour the temper, and arouse the hatred, even of prudent monarchs, when they view the subject as neutrals, with reference to social peace and quiet alone. The stubbornness, which refuses what is thought by them to be only a gentle restraint, will lead to harsher measures. Fresh acts of severity will breed fresh resistance, and louder charges of ungodliness and oppression. The ruler may have begun, like the Roman emperors of old, with an honest purpose of neutrality. But while he looks on the truth from without, as a mere stranger, he will be driven by a fatal necessity into the ranks of its bitter enemies. For the truth of God will not bend, like a willow, to suit the convenience or the ease of statesmen. Those who will not read its claims by its own light, and measure them by its own standard, have no moral power to restrain the faults and abuses of its disciples. They



must either throw down the reins of power, or else be hurried, by their own blindness, into a crusade of persecution against the faithful, who account heaven to be higher than earth, and the commands of the living God more binding than the laws of sinful men.

Such are the certain results, where the Ruler pretends to be neutral in religion, and still resolves to maintain fully his own power, and to uphold the peace of society, without any guiding light of religious truth. The downward course he is sure to travel has been shown in history by many examples, and may almost be seen with our eyes. Proselytism, when it leads to tumult, as truth itself will often do in an evil world, will seem like obstinate sedition. Perseverance in this course against human laws, as those must often do who obey God rather than man, will resemble direct rebellion. Meetings for worship, from which strangers are excluded, such as Christian fellowship may require, will be suspicious signs of treasonable conspiracy. The application of private funds to promote a creed or a system, which breeds contention, will seem a dangerous perversion of part of the national wealth. The claims of conscience and religious faith, and the instincts of social peace, will be in collision at every turn. And thus the Ruler who would be neutral, while content to be ignorant, and impartial to all creeds without caring for any, will soon be found to tolerate every pliant form of error that will bend to his will, and to persecute, as a dangerous adversary, the unbending Word and Truth of God.



## CHAPTER V.

## ON NATIONAL ECONOMY.

THE Civil Magistrate, who believes in God and His word, must be guided by the lessons and truths of the Gospel in all his efforts to execute justice and restrain open crime. But his duties have a wider range. He is God's minister for good to the people; his power is a trust from the Most High for this great end. Whether there be rumours of war without, or risk of famine at home, fresh openings for commerce, or new occasions for advancing the nation's honour and greatness, all men look instinctively to those in authority, and reckon it their duty to use every effort to avert the threatened evil, or secure the hoped-for benefit. To renounce these duties would be almost an abdication of their office, and would at least prove them unworthy of their high and sacred trust.

'All the power of civil government,' it has been asserted, 'relates only to man's civil interests, is confined to the care of the things of this world, and has nothing to do with the life to come. With the care of souls the civil magistrate ought not to interfere.' This doctrine implies two things: that the ruler's office is confined to man's

lower interests, the wants of the body; and next, that these are an independent good, and may be secured without any need of Divine wisdom, or any need for the public recognition of religious truth. It is the second of these maxims that we have first to consider.

The things of the present life, it is assumed in this theory of politics, have no intimate connexion with those of the life to come. They are the objects of two sciences wholly distinct from each other. Wealth, knowledge, worldly comfort, and national greatness, may be secured by worldly expedients, and enjoyed for their own sake alone. Heavenly wisdom is no help in attaining them, and when attained, no consecration to God is needful to render them a real blessing. Man has, therefore, two spheres of action wholly distinct. In the first he has only to secure his outward comfort by worldly prudence. In the other, if a Christian believer, he has to seek the welfare of his soul by faith in God and obedience to His will. Civil government is meant to aid him in the former pursuit alone. The one aim of the ruler is to be the physical wealth of the nation; and his chief maxim, that a man's life does consist in the abundance of his possessions. He must care nothing, publicly, for religious truth, nor put any difference between one creed and another. If he does, he steps beyond his province, is guilty of insult and injury to the less favoured, and violates the fundamental law of religious equality. All his laws and policy are thus to be exactly the same as if there were no life beyond the grave. The examples such a ruler must follow in his public conduct, the models for his special imitation, are the men of the world, who have their portion

in this life, or the rich man in the parable, who found his good things in outward riches and abundance alone.

A national policy based on such maxims, with the serious and devout Christian, bears the brand of its own shame stamped on its forehead. The whole system, like some chemical compounds, needs to be prepared carefully in the dark, and detonates and explodes when the first ray of God's sunlight is let in upon it. Its peace is that of a moral solitude, where God has been banished from the thoughts and plans of His own creatures. Nothing is there to be seen but a sandy waste of actions divorced from the laws of eternal duty, of gifts dissevered from acknowledgment of the Bountiful Giver, and of powers exercised without reference to Him who has bestowed them, the only true Source of life, happiness, and joy.

I. National Safety must be foremost among the objects of a wise ruler. The elements on which it chiefly depends are internal union, moral and political energy, a reputation for justice and honour, and the direct blessing of God. All of these require National Religion for their full and complete attainment.

A kingdom divided against itself, our Lord has told us, is brought to desolation. How then can that unity, without which safety is impossible, be best secured? Lower motives have doubtless some power, common interests, common dangers, the recollection of past renown, the common desire of national greatness and glory. But where all religious faith is excluded from the public counsels, these motives will gradually lose their force. The present interests of classes, ranks, and parties, which

diverge from and conflict with each other, will be more palpable, and will prevail over them. The school of thought, which shuts out the life to come, will be blind even to temporal interests that lie remote, and which need some measure of faith to discern them. The need of union for public safety will be forgotten in the strife of faction, and amidst the disputes and jealousies of the passing hour. Reverence for the past can only flourish where a religious tone of thought prevails. Nations that forget God will forget or despise their own ancestors also. The same theory, which excludes religious truth from the national counsels, is fatal to the sense of hereditary greatness, and separates the living generation from all share in the renown of their fathers. The desire of glory, under the same circumstances, will be a consuming and baleful meteor, not a beneficent light. It will prompt to deeds of wrong and violence, that bring on, soon or late, a heavy retribution. Every other bond of union, when religious truth is abandoned, must rapidly be dissolved, and lose its uniting power.

Wherever States have attained lasting greatness apart from Christian truth, a few main elements of faith, still retained, have usually been the cement of the social fabric. On the other hand, wherever religion has created national disunion, it has been either in the first steps of its growth, when received only by a few, or when irreligious strife has cloaked itself under the name of religious zeal. These fierce disputes have been signs of the weakness, not the strength, of the national faith. The mere zealot is an atheist in disguise; and when religion, in Milton's words

‘runs lavishly to the outer skin,’ to spend itself in rites and ceremonies, or party strife alone, its vital power is ready to pass away.

Real Christian faith, diffused through the land, is the best pledge of social unity. For all rivalries and clashing interests have their seat in man’s lower nature ; in the higher sphere the interests and wants of all are the same. The more they rise towards heaven, the more complete will be their union. The truths of national and revealed religion are the great and essential unities of man’s nature. One God has created us, one moral ruin has come upon us, one Redeemer has been provided for us, one counsel of love and mercy is around us. There is ‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism,’ one hope of our calling, one heavenly Father, and for those who believe and obey, one eternal home. These great truths, and these alone, are the basis for a sure and lasting union. Whenever these are widely impressed on the consciences of men, there is a firm groundwork for the social edifice. That the instincts of brotherhood may prevail over the growing strife of secular interests, our higher nature needs to be fed continually on truths divine and eternal. National unity has seldom been conspicuous, unless clothed with the form and shape of some religious impulse, when ideas, nobler than those of mere selfish interest, have been called in to sustain it.

Moral energy is another main element of national safety. The rise of States has commonly been marked by this feature, and its absence is a symptom of their approaching fall. Historians have often marked the resemblance between the growth and decay of the human body,



and the rise and fall of kingdoms. They have come to look upon States as short-lived and mortal, like the men who compose them. How far this lesson of past experience applies to the future is among the mysteries of Providence. But at least it is plain that no influence can be so mighty, as faith in heavenly truth, to preserve the moral energy of a State, and avert the progress of decay. Wherever it prevails, the national mind will be invigorated and ennobled ; but when it dies out, the nation will resolve itself into a chaos of selfish interests, a region of confusion and darkness.

Since the Ruler, then, is bound to promote the national, safety and develop the national life, while faith in God's word is the main fountain of all generous impulses and noble actions, it must be his duty to maintain and diffuse this faith by his example, his bold confession, and the whole spirit of his legislation. It must be folly to neglect so powerful a means of moral and political strength, even if his object were limited to the temporal good of the State over which he rules.

But the safety of a State depends, further, on its reputation for justice and honour. When its character is lost, only brute force can shield it from contempt and hatred, and perhaps from combined efforts for its ruin. A kingdom, notorious for wrong-doing and violence, can only exist, like Cain, upon sufferance. It will almost need a perpetual miracle to keep it from the ban and curse of all surrounding powers, and thus to shield it from overthrow and ruin.

Now when rulers exclude religious truth entirely from the field of politics, their course will resemble that of a



private person, who is swayed by worldly motives alone. Their policy will be a selfish policy. To make sacrifices to justice, or refrain from profitable wrong, will seem a stupid neglect of the public interest. They will annex or conquer, devastate or defraud, truckle or tyrannise, as may seem best at the moment. The judgments of God will be far above out of their sight. A negative theory, borrowed from pious and mistaken men, but worked out with relentless consistency by infidel politicians, will sweep away and shut out from their counsels the whole firmament of moral and spiritual truth. No law will be left for their guidance but the tricks of the cunning or the violence of the strong ; no pole-star but the meteors of successful ambition in the great conquerors of the world. The result will be the destruction of all mutual confidence, and enormous and oppressive war establishments, the sign of universal suspicion and distrust. Then will come some sudden eruption of violence, and a general *saute qui peut* of nations, a rush of selfish passions and mercenary fears, where justice, honour, gratitude, humanity, and every noble and generous feeling, will be trampled in the dust.

But another element of national safety, too much forgotten by statesmen, is the direct favour and blessing of God. The higher we rise in true discernment, the more will this one cause absorb and swallow up every other. Let us freely allow that God works chiefly by second causes, and that nations rise and fall by moral influences, which may in some measure be foreseen, and which human wisdom or folly may regulate for good or evil. The union, the energy, and the known justice of a State, have much to do with its happiness and security. But without

staying to inquire how far these causes themselves depend in secret on the hand of God, there are many things in which even worldly eyes may see the dependence of nations on His blessing. Science has done much to explore the secrets of nature and of the human frame ; but there is a field of mystery beyond her discoveries, which the Father of spirits has reserved, like the times and seasons, in His own power. The fruitfulness of the earth, and the health of nations, depend on many causes beyond the range of human wisdom. Even on grounds of mere expediency, it is extreme folly to form schemes of policy in which God is wholly forgotten, while famine and pestilence still remain His sore judgments on guilty nations. One touch of His hand can palsy the strength of the mightiest empire, like the arm of the sinful king of Israel. Their harvests may be blighted, their fields may wither, the earth may mourn in vain to the silent heavens, when the showers have been withholden, and there is no latter rain. Diseases, before unknown, or changed into new forms, and baffling the pride of science, may sweep away ten thousands in a moment, and cover whole provinces with desolation and mourning. In such a world how should kingdoms venture to adopt that unbelieving policy, in which God is forgotten, and His truth banished from their councils? How can they ever lose sight for a moment of the truth of truths, that there is a God in heaven by whom alone princes decree justice ; who removeth kings, and setteth up kings, who increaseth the nations, and straiteneth them again ; and that this Almighty God has revealed His will, and commanded it to be published to all nations, to be the guide of all their

thoughts, their words, their actions, their plans, their hopes, and desires, to the very end of time? How can they dare to scheme for the national welfare, and neglect to glorify Him in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways? Such a view of their duty, one would think, could hardly be received, till men have sunk so low in unbelief as to lose the faculty of reason. And yet, strange to say, this delusion has prevailed, and still prevails, and finds zealous advocates among pious men. This attempt to turn the fields of political science into a moral preserve, where the revealed truth of God is forbidden to enter, is one of the strangest prodigies our fallen world has ever witnessed; and will so appear to all, when once the veil is withdrawn, and the King of kings shall reveal His divine Majesty to the wonder and adoration of the whole universe.

II. National Wealth is another main object which is naturally included among the ends of civil government. To suppose that national religion is essential, here also, may seem at first sight ridiculous and absurd. Experience has shown that great opulence may be attained without any profession of true faith, and sometimes even side by side with gross idolatry and superstition, or equally gross irreligion of the people and their rulers. But the paradox disappears, when we consider more narrowly the nature of wealth, and the true object of our inquiry.

How are we, then, to define that national wealth, which it should be the main object of rulers to promote and increase? Is their aim to be only this, that a few individuals may amass enormous fortunes, or the whole nation be flushed with a momentary fever of com-

mercial prosperity? The true inquiry must be, how wealth may be attained, secured, diffused, and applied, so as to raise the State and its citizens to the greatest possible height of real and solid well-being. Every other form into which the question may be thrown involves a serious delusion, and hides the real object which alone the rulers of the State are bound ever to keep in view. Now a race of misers and prodigals, a multitude of paupers, surrounded by a few piles of enormous wealth, may perhaps be attainable by worldly maxims alone. But while creating riches to diffuse them, and thus to preserve the people from the double curse of cankered gold and silver and luxurious profligacy, are tasks which require, in those who would fulfil them, a large measure of moral insight and heavenly wisdom. They make it needful that the word of God should mould the policy of statesmen, and control the hearts and lives of the subject people.

Rulers who would promote national wealth ought first to understand clearly its true nature. This is not so easy as many suppose. Does wealth consist in a large store of gold and silver? This notion was once popular, but is now almost exploded, though our present artificial laws of currency are in some danger of bringing us back to it again. States which possessed the richest mines have sunk into poverty and political degradation. Does it consist in the amount of manufactured goods? We have seen repeatedly of late that a glut of merchandise has been the occasion of most bitter and deep distress. Is it the amount of the public revenue? Then those nations would be poorest which are most lightly taxed, and fiscal oppression would for a time increase the national prosperity.

Is national wealth to be defined by the total amount of private revenues? Then the nation might increase in riches, while the mass of the people were starving in deep want, if a certain proportion of misers and capitalists could amass prodigious fortunes, to be squandered, perhaps, by their spendthrift heirs in profligacy and crime.

All those theories, which make wealth the foundation of public and private industry, are unable to determine the true nature of that wealth which they propose to secure for their disciples. Their favourite idol is a veiled prophet, and the veil it wears on its face they are unable to remove. For indeed wealth, when once divorced in thought from the weal or moral well-being of man, is a delusive shadow, and mocks the pursuit of its eager votaries. It is not measured by gold and silver, for these change their value from age to age. It does not consist in bales of merchandise, for these only ruin their producers when no market for them can be found. It is not measured by the labour of production; for labour may be wasted on useless follies, or on things worse than useless, the incentives of vice and crime. It does not depend even on the certainty of sale, for purchasers may be ruined by their love for pernicious vanities. Every theory of its nature is hollow and worthless, which does not distinguish real from illusive wants, and learn to measure man's real wants by a true standard, derived from a just view of the solid and lasting interests of mankind.

The neglect of this first principle of logical thought, no less than of moral wisdom, is a secret and fatal defect in almost every current system of Political Economy. Their authors build without securing their foundation.



They define, and the next theorist, with an equal show of truth, reverses the definition. Most of them persist in treating wealth as an independent object or quality, whether they define it by gold and silver, by the amount of manufactures, by the labour and cost of production, or by producing power. They strive to measure it by and for itself, and neglect its only true standard, the fitness of outward objects to promote the true happiness and welfare of men. The wealth which gratifies mere caprice, and feeds imaginary wants, is itself imaginary, not real. That which pampers hurtful lusts is not wealth, but poison. To measure it aright, we must distinguish real wants from those which are deceptive, resulting only of moral disease, and weigh them in the balance of good sense and enlightened reason.

This first lesson of true Political Economy will seldom be learned without a public and national reverence for the word of God. Statesmen, when that word is despised and forgotten, will grasp at some unreal shadow. They will encourage and flatter that fever of speculation which they ought to allay, and that thirst of gain which drowns men in perdition. In the name of liberty the poor will be abandoned to selfish oppression, and a course be pursued which condemns millions to want and moral degradation. To cheapen an article of luxury will be of more account than the happiness of a thousand homes; and humanity and honour will be sacrificed, that exports and imports may reach a higher figure, and the national revenues be increased for a little season.

Industry is the great source of national wealth. The word of God assigns it a high place among religious



duties, and makes it the subject of a Divine command. False religion teaches an opposite lesson. It replaces social duties by empty ceremonies and religious holidays, and thus palsies the industry of nations. Its effects have been visible in the contest between Spain and Holland, between the Roman Catholic and Protestant Swiss Cantons, and our own empire supplies more than one confirmation of the same truth. Sluggish content amidst squalid misery is often closely allied with blind superstition.

But if industry is deadened and stifled by a superstitious creed, infidelity leads to an opposite evil, the wasting fever of speculation. The world is then the sole object, and the spirit of man spends its whole energy in physical pursuits which can never satisfy its large desires. Society becomes a vast engine, where the work to be done is not equal to the moving power, and the machine whirls round and tears itself to pieces. Avarice sets aside God's Sabbath of rest, and even night and day are confounded in the eager haste to amass riches. Capital thus accumulates, but labourers are consigned to mechanical drudgery, and obtain a smaller share in the fruits of their own labour. Hence are bred murmuring, disaffection, revolt, and bloody revolutions. When these whirlwinds are loosed, industry itself sickens and expires, ill-gotten wealth is scattered, and the hectic flush of seeming prosperity is followed by wasting and desolation. The crowned city, whose merchants were princes, may then be turned into a barren rock, a solitary haunt of fishermen in the midst of the seas.

Only true religion, owned in the public councils, and diffused through the State, can secure it from these

opposite dangers. Whether rulers encourage the sloth of superstition, or that unbelieving thirst for gain which contradicts and despises the warnings of Christ ; whether they allow the revenues to be largely alienated to superstitious uses, or God's sabbaths to be profaned, and God's poor oppressed, by the blind zealotry of trade ; in either case they promote the evils they are bound to oppose, and secretly undermine the pillars of the national wealth. Every truth which they refuse to recognise is replaced by some falsehood that nestles in their policy, unnoticed by careless eyes, till the State is bound in the fetters of superstition, or given up a prey to the worst forms of avarice. If they would secure the peace, safety, wealth, and honour of the nation, one course only remains open for them to pursue. They must become disciples indeed of Him by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice ; and enthrone the Gospel of Christ, in its purity and power, as the perpetual fountain-head of true wisdom in all the councils of the land.

## CHAPTER VI.

## ON NATIONAL EDUCATION.

THE education of the people is a subject which, at the present time, worthily occupies a large share of public attention. We enter here on middle ground, between those duties of the ruler which relate to temporal welfare and bodily wants, and those which arise from the higher wants of the immortal soul. And here, also, the difficulties of the system, which would divorce the policy of States from the Church of Christ, reveal themselves very clearly. The instincts of common sense and humanity demand that rulers should make it one chief aim to secure a right education for the great body of their people. On the other hand, Christian faith declares not less plainly that all right education must be moulded, in every part, by the revealed truth of God. But if these two maxims are allowed, the whole theory of State irreligion receives a deadly wound. And it is hard for those who embrace it to agree on the alternative they should choose. If they exclude education entirely from the province of the State, the prudence of statesmen, and the voice of common sense, will silence their scruples by

an indignant appeal to the wants and dangers of a neglected population. If they allow that the State is bound to educate, but in secular knowledge only, the conscience of the Christian rebels, and denounces godless education as a mockery of the real want of immortal souls. Religion, every Christian must feel, is here no separable element. It must be the life-blood of the whole, or the pretended education will be little else than a vain shadow. There is no escape from this dilemma, till the principle is welcomed once more, that Christ is the true Prince of the kings of the earth; and that rulers, who are His ministers, are bound, so far as their ability extends, to train the rising generation of their subjects in the faith and fear of His holy Name.

Three principles will be here maintained. First, it is the duty of rulers to promote and ensure the education of their people. Secondly, education, to be a real blessing, must be leavened throughout with the truths, precepts, and hopes of the Gospel. Thirdly, the religious and secular elements admit of no practical separation. They are like the soul and the body. Union is their life, and separation is their death.

I. First, it is the duty of rulers to promote and ensure the education of their people. This duty, indeed, may be misunderstood, and thus lead to very serious errors. Statesmen will be most unwise, if they attempt to supersede or prohibit the efforts of private zeal, when it labours to the same end. This would be to annul one duty by another, and the plainer and simpler by one less evident. Every parent is bound, to the extent of his own power, to provide for the education of his children. If all families

were perfect, the functions of the civil ruler would be far simpler, and easy to be fulfilled. But, however plain the duty of parents, a wide field remains, in every kingdom, for repairing the defects, and completing the outline, of private efforts in the cause of education. A mass of ignorance exists, painful in itself, and often dangerous to the peace and welfare of the State. Are rulers bound to resist this great evil? Ought they not to guide every right effort, to supply what is wanting, and to infuse unity, vigour, and moral power, into the whole work of national education?

This question is answered by the general consent of thoughtful men. How the State may best fulfil this great duty amidst the complexity of our social system, is a difficult and delicate inquiry, and may give rise to very different judgments. But the duty itself finds a witness in almost every conscience. The power of the State and the wants of the people have only to be placed side by side, and the conclusion is irresistible. 'To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.'

The most evident office of rulers is to repress and punish open crime. But prevention is far better than an imperfect and doubtful cure. Ignorance is the fruitful parent of every crime. The people are 'destroyed for lack of knowledge.' Sin would be more hateful than a serpent, if men only knew the misery that flows from vice, the happiness of a peaceful conscience, and the blessing of the Almighty, which is the portion of the upright alone. If rulers are bound to repress crime, where it has actually appeared, they are still more bound to diffuse that knowledge which would hinder its birth.



It is folly merely to cut off the heads of this hydra, and leave them to multiply faster after every wound. They ought, if possible, to be seared by the power of truth, that they may not start forth into new vitality. Why aim strokes continually against the outward forms of evil, and use no precautions against the source from which it flows? The truth of God must be like bars and doors to the fountain of that great deep, man's fallen heart, without which it will be sure to cover the nation with a flood of violence and wrong-doing.

The direct claims of social justice point to the same conclusion. Rulers are sent for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. No form of evil-doing is socially more injurious than the neglect of parents to educate their own children. No virtue deserves higher praise than their diligence, when they train their children in the fear of God and all useful learning. Such negligence, then, ought to be discouraged, and such diligence encouraged and cherished, by every ruler who would fulfil rightly his own trust. But this requires constant effort on the part of governors to bring a sound education within the reach of their people. If great numbers are hindered, by the oppression of trade, from educating their children, and are compelled rather to subsist on their earnings, the law must interpose its shield, and preserve an object so vital and important from being sacrificed to the blind cupidity of gain. There can be no punishment for the neglect of duties which it is impossible to fulfil. Rulers ought, therefore, to strive earnestly that education may be really accessible to all classes of people. They ought, further, to stimulate them, by re-



wards and penalties, to a due improvement of those means of culture, and mental, and moral improvement which have been set before them.

Again, there are several parts of national education, which can hardly be supplied without some direct help from the State. It needs, for its more advanced stages, the fostering care of kings and statesmen, and institutions answering to the greatness of the people over whom they rule. National colleges and universities have been the perpetual companions and causes of a high state of advancement and civilization. The science, wisdom, and learning of the whole State need to be united in a few main centres of moral influence, that they may produce their full effect, and elevate the general tone of society. Without such aid their strength will be wasted in desultory and feeble efforts, and must lose greatly in permanence, dignity, intellectual concert, and moral power.

The maintenance of the national honour is one of the first duties of the civil ruler. But there can be no worse disgrace of a people in the eyes of surrounding nations than prevailing ignorance. Learning, taste, science, and pure morals, diffused through a land, are the noblest honours to which it can aspire. How, then, can rulers neglect the education of their people without treachery to one main branch of their solemn trust? To their own indolence, or the prejudices of others, they would sacrifice the truest and highest glory of the nation. They are bound, if possible, to roll away the reproach of intellectual torpor and moral blindness, and to seek that those over whom they rule may be foremost among the nations in learning, morality, and true wisdom. If they neglect

this duty, they will be swineherds, rather than ministers of the Most High to image and reflect His bounty towards millions of redeemed men.

All the maxims of moral science confirm and ratify this great obligation. Rulers have a power, which no others have in the same measure, to quicken and promote the education of the people. They must be aware that knowledge is power, and sound education an inestimable social blessing. No dictate of reason, no voice of God, forbids them to enter on a task so honourable in itself, and so beneficial to the whole nation. To neglect it, then, must be a grievous sin. It would reverse the divine command, 'As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men.' Millions might thus be deprived of a blessing they would else have gained, and be left to sink in brutish ignorance; when the faithfulness of their rulers might have prepared them for honourable services to society here, or even for nobler fellowship hereafter with the redeemed in heaven. On the other hand, 'the favour of the king is as a cloud of the latter rain.' And when that favour is bestowed on an object so worthy, showers of blessing would soon descend, in rich abundance, to redeem the wastes of ignorance and vice, and fertilise every barren wilderness of error and moral degradation throughout the land.

II. Secondly, Education, to deserve the name, must be moulded in every part by the Word and Gospel of Christ. There is here no middle ground. Neutrality is impossible in its very nature. Education must be godly, or it will be godless. It must lead the soul through every part of the works of God to the knowledge and love of

their Divine Author; or else it will prove only a winding labyrinth of error, where men may hide themselves, like Adam among the trees of Paradise, from the presence of their Maker.

What is the true nature and purpose of Christian education? Nothing less than the training of immortal souls for an everlasting kingdom of glory. To profess to believe the Gospel, and to aim only at some lower object is folly and madness. To impart some dry details of science or history is not to educate in the true and Christian sense of the word. This is a higher and nobler work. It is by instruction and moral influence, by discipline and prayer, to enable men to secure the high ends for which they were created, that they may reflect the image of God, and enjoy Him for ever. It is not a training for this world only, an intellectual luxury that dazzles and deceives, but a moral discipline of which the fruits will abide and endure in the life to come. Whenever this end is kept in view, all else must be strictly subordinate. Science, literature, history, will subserve this one design. Every world of natural truth will revolve around this great moral centre, and obey the grand law which guides and sustains the whole system. Each will swell the general harmony, like the music of the angels,—

‘No voice exempt, no voice but well can join  
Harmonious part,—such concord is in Heaven.’

In such a Christian education the means will correspond with the great object. Foremost in the system, most honoured, as well as most honourable, will be the Word of God. To exclude this under any pretext is like

a mark of Cain on the forehead of the plan, and proclaims it an outcast from the kingdom of truth. The Word of God, used with a wise selection, but without corrupt additions or dishonest mutilations, should be the crown and glory of the whole. All the sciences must come and draw light, in their golden urns, from this inexhaustible fountain. Their substance will consist of the patient researches and discoveries of men; but the spirit and life which animate them, if they are to help the great work of true education, must be found in the messages of inspired wisdom. The laws of nature must be made to lead the thoughts to those deeper ordinances of eternal justice, which are the foundation that bears up the throne of God. The firmament must declare His glory, and the earth and its fulness bear witness to His bounty and wisdom. The facts of history must lend their voice to reveal His mercy and righteousness in the various dealings of His providence with the children of men. Every part of natural science will thus be a handmaid of religion. It must have been possessed by some unclean and dumb spirit, when it is silent concerning the Lord of all; and needs to be exorcised by a deeper faith, before it can fulfil its part aright in the noble work of Christian education.

Secular education, when once entirely divorced from religious truth, would be a curse rather than a blessing. The statement may be denied, but admits, to the Christian mind, of a decisive demonstration. The chief excuse for denying it is, that in practice the separation can hardly ever be complete. A little religious truth, deeply impressed on the conscience, may turn a large measure of secular knowledge into a blessing, as the philosopher's stone

was fabled to convert whole masses of baser metal into pure gold. But once let the separation be complete, and we must deny our faith in Christ, in order to dispute the proposition. All secular knowledge, indeed, is in its own nature good. But when it enters into man's sinful heart without any corrective of Divine truth, it aggravates the moral evil within. 'Knowledge puffeth up.' When sought for its own sake, without any regard to the Divine will, the indulgence of the intellectual appetite is a rebellion against God no less real than sensual corruption. Ignorance, it is true, degrades men to the level of the brutes. But unsanctified knowledge, gained by the mere working of self-will, and based merely on pride, resembles the sin of sorcery, and turns the soul into the likeness and image of the spirits of darkness.

Mere secular instruction can never be that education which statesmen are bound to provide for their people, or which Christian faith can accept as a real boon. The tree of knowledge may be tasted, as of old; but the tree of life, whose leaves alone avail for the healing of the nations, will have been forsaken and despised. Dry statistics will never solace the cottager at his daily toil; nor will theories of wealth, however elaborate, root out discontent from the hearts of millions, whom their own intemperance and the fever of trade have condemned, year after year, to hopeless drudgery. All the useful and entertaining knowledge which triflers can extract from the whole universe, when God is forgotten, and His truth cast aside, can never, even in their influence on the peace and comfort of the present life, replace that one promise, that 'God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom



He hath promised to them that love Him.' Secular knowledge of all kinds, diffused to the utmost, with no corrective or infusion of Divine truth, would almost reverse Milton's bold conception; and transform multitudes of fallen spirits, the prey of evil passions, from pigmies comparatively harmless into gigantic fiends.

III. Thirdly, the two elements of religious and secular education are practically inseparable. There can be no such division, as that the State should convey secular instruction, and devolve the teaching of religious truth entirely upon others. Every such attempt will prove, in reality, visionary and deceptive.

The separation may be attempted in three different forms. The civil power may barely provide secular teaching, and leave it to chance whether there shall be any religious instruction, and if any, whether it shall be true or false, wholesome or pernicious. Or it may recognize the need of some religious teaching, and arrange that all teachers of every creed shall have access to the public schools in turn; or that each shall instruct those whose parents desire it, without any attempt to distinguish one creed from another. Or, finally, it may seek to incorporate a certain general religion with the secular system, and leave all special doctrines, as before, to be separately instilled by the ministers of religion.

The first system alone carries out fully the separation of religion from civil affairs. But if more consistent than the others, it is in the same degree still more mischievous and unnatural. What is the province of the Government teacher, where such a system is received? It is to invent a universe of thought without a God. It is to teach every-



thing that concerns the works of the Most High, without one acknowledgment of Him by whom all things consist, and for whose pleasure they are, and were created. Taught under such auspices, all science and history, and every field of human thought, becomes 'a land of darkness and of the shadow of death, and where the light is darkness.' To explore the works of God, and never to own the great Architect; to search into the world's history, and be silent on the truth, wherein that history centres, God manifest in the flesh; to create a system of knowledge without one allusion to the true Fountain of all light and wisdom; to discover a world without a Saviour, and a universe without a God, will now be the climax and ideal of national education. Is this the gift which conscience demands from Christian rulers? Is this scheme of ungodliness the panacea which can banish crime, and spread union, peace, and contentment through the land? Such rulers are asked for bread, and give the people a stone. They are asked for a fish, and offer only a serpent. Education, so maimed and distorted, is education only in name, and is almost sure to propagate throughout the people a proud and self-complacent ungodliness.

Another plan may be proposed to remedy this fatal defect. The State may now borrow religious teaching from other sources, to supply the defects of merely secular instruction. But without real Christian discernment the attempt will be vain. If rulers have no knowledge to discern the truth, and no heart to prize it, their only resource will be that spurious candour which lends equal patronage to every form of true and false opinion. They will then patch up their secular instruction with six or

seven, or perhaps twenty varieties of religious doctrine. None of these can possibly become a vital influence to leaven the course of public education. Each will be a patch-work addition to a scheme, which is reckoned tolerably complete without it. Its introduction will be no homage to God's eternal truth, but a mere worldly compliment to some prevailing opinion. The rival creeds tend simply to neutralise each other, and will leave behind a *caput mortuum* of dry, sarcastic, and contemptuous unbelief. Under such a system the scepticism will rapidly be matured, which accounts religious faith a mere question of parentage or geography, and consents to wear the mask of any creed, because it believes in none. What must be the issue? A chaos of creeds, a medley of religious opinions that contradict each other, is added, a few hours in every week, to a secular education, which discovers for men a world without a Saviour, and a universe without a Creator. What worse parody can there be of that magnificent and noble idea, the Christian education of a great people? The State would thus patronise all creeds, and believe in none. It would indorse and stereotype in its schools every existing form of error, and enthrone all the gods of Olympus or Mount-Meru, or the idols of later superstition, side by side with the God of holiness, and the only Redeemer of mankind.

To solve the difficulty without recourse to the principle of national religion, a third attempt may be made. The State may seek to embody some general form of religion in its secular education, and leave special forms of doctrine or discipline to be taught at other times by the various teachers of religion. This plan may be so modified as to

approach very nearly, in a divided and distracted state of the visible Church, to the path of true wisdom. But then it must renounce at the same time the maxim of religious indifference, and even requires, on the part of rulers, no common measure of religious light and spiritual discernment.

What does this new plan really imply? First, it admits that the whole course of education ought to be leavened with the great truths of religion. Secular knowledge alone is owned to be insufficient. A few hours, also, of special doctrinal teaching cannot remove the evil of a plan, in which all the higher truths of religion are rigidly excluded from every daily lesson. In the next place, it is implied that many rites and doctrines in which Christians differ are less important than others in which most agree. It supposes that the general religion, consisting of doctrines in which there is substantial agreement, is more needful, and better suited for the daily instruction of the ignorant, than questions where differences chiefly abound. Further, while it endeavours to secure the interests of morality by the daily inculcation of general religion, it abandons special doctrines to the care of those Christian teachers by whom they are respectively maintained. To reduce it, then, to practice, rulers must be competent to decide how much of religious truth is vital, generally received, and ought to be patronised and retained; and how much is only of secondary importance, and may be abandoned to the care of those Christians by whom it is prized.

When we compare this third plan with the theory of national indifference, it will be found guilty, at every

point, of evident inconsistency. There are three elements on which it depends. The first is the separation of general and special religion, to be effected by the discernment of the Civil Ruler. The second is the universal inculcation, by public authority, of all that is called general religious truth. The third is the enforcement of an opposite rule in the case of special religion; so that every form of it, right or wrong, has equal facilities provided, and is taught impartially under the eye of the State.

The first of these maxims is alone fatal to the theory of national indifference. For what is its real nature? It assigns to the ruler a religious office, far more difficult than simply to adopt what he deems the best and purest creed or Church, and then to give it his undivided support. He has to compare perhaps twenty systems of doctrine and discipline, to extract from them the elements he deems of chief social importance, or best suited for the work of education; and then to lay down this general religion, this pure extract from twenty religious creeds or systems, for the basis of a practical scheme which is to include the whole nation. Such a task, if possible at all, must need for its right execution the highest measure of spiritual discernment. To deny that the ruler is competent to decide, officially, even between Judaism or Mahomedanism and Christianity, and then to assign him a task which even the most learned, cautious, and profound Divines would undertake only with fear and trembling, is no common inconsistency, and fatal to the theory which rests on such a foundation.

The second principle involved in this third plan is equally opposed to the theory of State indifference. This

general religion, the extract of the rest, cannot without a miracle be universally received. The plea of social injustice, if it has any force against religious establishments, applies equally to this new system of State religion. However few truths are included, those who reject any of them may clamour against their national adoption, as involving their own social degradation. The Atheist will complain that he is taxed to propagate an idle superstition, and the Deist, that he has to pay for the spread of a religious imposture. The principle, in short, is conceded, that the claims of vital and living truth are higher and holier than the false maxim of strict social equality between rival opinions. Once let this admission be carried out to its necessary results, and the whole theory and practice of national indifference will crumble hopelessly into dust.

The principle thus accepted is indeed of wide application, and refuses to be shut in by artificial bounds. If, in spite of the scruples of atheists, the being and government of God may be assigned to this general religion, and inculcated by the State, because of its vital importance, the maxim will apply equally to the Incarnation and Divine mission of the Son of God. No limit can be assigned to the amount of truth which may lawfully claim the direct sanction of the State, except that the benefit from their diffusion shall outweigh the evils of partial irritation and vexatious opposition, on the part of those who disbelieve and reject them. The principle of religious establishments is thus fairly yielded, and the only question that will remain is the wise and safe limit to be observed in its practical application.



The third maxim involved in the plan departs equally from the strict theory of national indifference. It has also a deeper fault, and is equally opposed to the eternal laws of truth and righteousness. Equal facilities are to be provided for the teachers of all forms of special religion in connexion with the public schools of the State. In its practical result, therefore, all classes are taxed by the State, in order to provide facilities for the teachers of all creeds, true or false, to propagate or maintain them. There is a Civil Establishment, only the doctrine established is not the truth of the Gospel, but the social indifference of all religious creeds. The establishment of God's truth is replaced by that of a fatal error, but the principle of a State establishment remains. All are taxed, to propagate all forms of faith at the public expense, in proportion to the number of those who hold them; and those are taxed for this object, who account it infidel and ungodly. The desired ideal of State impartiality towards all religious opinions is thus as far as ever from being really attained.

Thus all the maxims, involved in this last form of attempted separation between the religious and secular elements of education, are inconsistent with the theory they are meant to satisfy, and even with each other. The State is required to exercise a very difficult and arduous office in religious matters. The principle of national Christianity is ceded in one half of the scheme, and contradicted in the other. In many cases it will be replaced by the national patronage of delusive and dangerous error. The conclusion becomes evident, that since States are bound to educate, and true education must be re-



ligious, religious faith cannot, without sin and logical inconsistency, be excluded from the province of Christian rulers.

Divine truth is, and must ever be, the heart and soul of all right education. For this is nothing else than the training of human souls, in this first stage of their mortal probation, for immortality and honour in the judgment day. Truth must leaven the whole lump, or it will be practically worthless. But the religion for which we justly claim this high prerogative is higher and nobler than what mere politicians or sectarian disputants too often understand by the name. It does not consist in forms, and rites, and empty disputations, but in the great doctrines, precepts, and hopes of the Gospel. It is the kingdom of God in the heart, defined by no verbal subtleties, but by the sublime definition of the apostle, 'righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' It is the duty of rulers to aim at providing for the children of their people such an education, where Christ and His salvation shall hold the foremost place, and to have this golden thread inwoven into the whole system. The peace, welfare, and honour of the State, which can be exalted only by righteousness, demand this at their hands. The neglect of this duty, out of deference to the unbelief of Atheists or Deists, or the contentions of Christians themselves, can only serve to bring moral blood-guiltiness on the land.

But this work, however necessary, plainly requires great wisdom in times like the present, when religious divisions abound. If it be needful to distinguish the main doctrines of the faith from special forms of worship

or religious systems, the separation must require the deepest wisdom, and a clear discernment of the bearings of Divine truth on social happiness. Wherever it is attempted, the maxim of State indifference must have been set aside, and replaced by nobler principles of national wisdom.

The State is bound to promote Christian education, and this alone. It ought, then, to encourage all efforts to instruct the young and ignorant in sound doctrine; and its encouragement should be proportioned to the practical efficiency and the religious soundness of the instructions conveyed. It must learn, then, to discern truth from falsehood, the teaching which enforces genuine Christian morality from that which annuls it, and turns it into an engine of priestly superstition, or antinomian and immoral license. In all its patronage of individuals or communities, it will require that public allegiance be rendered to the authority of the Word of God. But it will insist less on abstract doctrines than on the reality of their application to the hearts and consciences of those who receive instruction. It will give its countenance to all who honour God's word, and enforce its true doctrines; but more fully where there is a readiness, in return, to own and honour rulers as the ministers of God, and cheerfully to aid them in their efforts to diffuse truth and righteousness through the land. In those more public institutions which are distinctly national, and which rely more directly upon State patronage, the same laws of duty will be still more openly recognised and maintained.

Last of all, the ruler who would train his people in the fear of God will himself recognise and obey the ordi-

nances of Christ. He will see, in the visible Church and its ministers, a divine provision for diffusing truth, light, love, and holiness, among all the nations of the earth. He will therefore thankfully and earnestly accept their aid. He will neither exact unholy conditions as the terms of his co-operation, nor suffer the unwise scruples of some good men to deter him from the noblest of the duties to which God has called him. Like Jehoshaphat or Hezekiah, he will encourage by his public counsel and praise, and his private example and friendship, those who teach his people 'the good knowledge of God.' If the Church is corrupt, he will labour for its reformation; if rent with divisions and jealousies, he will seek earnestly to restore its union. He will not shatter it by fresh impositions, but endeavour to attract all its members by a public standard of truth, liberty, and love. Thus by degrees all the servants of Christ may come to see how blessed and holy is the work, when religious strife is replaced by the Ruler's efforts to enlighten and instruct an ignorant population, and kings obey the voice of Christ and honour His word and are the nursing fathers of a religious and enlightened people. 'Blessed are the people who are in such a case; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God.'

## CHAPTER VII.

## ON NATIONAL WORSHIP.

RULERS and kings, by virtue of their office, represent the State in its intercourse with other nations. This truth is clear in itself, and confirmed by the voice of all history and the conscience of mankind. But they also represent the State before God. His moral government has two aspects, distinct but harmonious. It includes every child of man, and deals also with nations at large. The prevailing influences on each State reflect themselves, sooner or later, on the characters of those who rule. The whole nation is thus responsible for the public conduct of its rulers. These are the visible exponents of the spirit which animates the whole body. They are the organs of the national mind; and their official acts, in the eye of human and divine law, are accounted to be the acts of the nation. What, then, are those duties, which this view of their office implies?

Every child of man is under a moral law, binding upon him as a creature endued with reason and will. These personal duties remain, whatever may be the further relations into which he is brought towards his fellow-men. But he is also the member of a family, and sustains rela-

tions, as parent or child, brother or sister, to its other members. Out of these new relations new duties arise. The child is bound to honour and obey his parents; while parents are bound to cherish, love, and protect their children, and to train them up in the fear of God. The whole family have also common relations and common duties, their result, in which all its members share. And these family duties can only be fulfilled by him whom God has appointed to be the head of the household, and who represents it in the eye of law, both human and divine.

The same truth applies to nations. Every member of the State has duties which arise from his relation to other members of the same great society. But the whole State is also the object of common mercies or trials, which apply to it in its public character — war, pestilence, famine, peace, plenty, victory, national greatness. Out of these facts of Providence new duties must arise. These can be satisfied by no private individual acts, but only by the acts of those who represent the nation in the sight of the world.

The ideal unity of nations is thus no fiction, but a great reality of Providence. It is like a branch from that main doctrine of religion, on which our redemption depends, the moral unity of the whole race of mankind. If men were merely separate individuals, they could not be involved in one common fall, nor the objects of one common work of redeeming grace in a Divine atonement. Yet each of them is separately responsible, and must give account of himself before God. The same contrast appears in the laws of national duty. The unity of the nation lies midway between individual personality and the unity



of the whole race of mankind. Christian wisdom, as it increases, reveals to us more and more the links which bind man to man in the family, the nation, and the whole race, and thus enlarges our standard of religious duty in confession, prayer, thanksgiving, and praise.

The truth that a nation is one, and yet manifold in the sight of God, has striking illustration in the language of the Divine law. Singular and plural terms are there intermingled almost in every page. The change runs through the whole book of Deuteronomy, and occurs fifty or sixty times in its opening chapters. (Deut. i.-iii.) We are thus taught, in a simple and impressive manner, that a nation has a twofold character before God. Its collective unity does not set aside the responsibility of each person, and the rights of individual conscience do not annul the collective responsibility of the whole people.

The same truth is plainly taught by many Scriptural figures. Nations are described as daughters and virgins, and even as married to God. Their apostasy is adultery, and His rejection of them a divorce. These figures are unmeaning and deceptive, unless those nations have collective duties to God and men, and are capable of entering into covenant with their Maker, and of incurring His anger by a public rejection of His will.

I. Nations receive their being from God. The union which constitutes them a nation is the direct result of His power and providence. He has implanted those instincts which prompt men to combine in social fellowship, and has given the faculty of speech, which renders their union possible. The laws of social duty are a branch of His righteous law, and without these the State would



resolve itself into a chaos of self-will. The geographical divisions of the earth, the migrations of races, the variations of language, all are due to His wise Providence, with a view to the use of these separate nations. He alone gives firmness to human government, by planting it on the rock of His Divine sovereignty; so that in every kingdom 'there is no power but of God, and the powers that be are ordained of God.' Not only men as men, but citizens as citizens, rulers as rulers, and states and kingdoms themselves, owe their being to the sovereign King of Heaven. 'He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them; He enlargeth the nations and straiteneth them again.' As Creator, He bestows the powers which fit men for civil society; as their Preserver, He guides and controls their exercise according to His own will; and the birth and continuance of every kingdom is due to the mind and wisdom of the Most High. 'He hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the whole earth, and hath fixed the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations.'

From these revealed truths there flows at once the first law of national duty. Since nations, even in their social and public life, are the creatures of God, they are bound to honour Him with public worship. Ought the nation to seek its own welfare? It ought still more to honour and reverence that God, from whose hand it must receive every temporal and spiritual blessing. Ought it to repress crime? It ought still more to free itself from that first and greatest crime, the proud independence which refuses to acknowledge the Source of its own mercies, the Fountain of its own being. Ought it to be faith-

ful in its duties to neighbouring states? Still more should it respect those obligations which bind every nation, as a dependent creature, to the footstool of the Eternal King. This great truth is therefore doubly presented in Scripture, as a direct command and a glorious promise: 'Let Israel rejoice in him that made her, and let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.' 'All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name. For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone.'

When national treaties are broken, no equity of rulers in their private character can repair the wrong. But there is a higher justice, which claims their reverence and worship for that God whose creatures they are, and on whom their being depends. No private acts of the citizens, and no extra-official piety of rulers, can remove the evil, if they refuse, officially and publicly, to give the Lord the glory due to His name. The nation, from the hour of its birth, is under a virtual covenant of allegiance to its Almighty Parent. When this covenant has been openly ratified, and there has been a consecration of the State to the profession of Divine truth and the worship of the Most High, they must incur redoubled guilt, if they withdraw that allegiance, and cast away those cords of a holy profession, which bind them, as the disciples of Christ, to the throne of their Father in heaven.

II. Secondly, nations, as nations, are liable to chastisements from God, and heavy judgments because of their sins. This truth was confessed even by the heathen, and is fully taught in the Word of God. He has named, by one of His prophets, four of the most usual instru-

ments of His anger against guilty nations—war, famine, pestilence, and the beasts of the earth. War in every instance, and famine in most, has a national character, which even careless eyes must see. The same is often true of pestilence, when diseases sweep through one kingdom, and pass lightly by another. The plague has found its home for ages in the Mahometan countries of the East. But when the judgment is national, the repentance ought to be of the same kind. It is not enough to renounce private sins, while public iniquities remain in force, and no voice is heard from the high places of power, to turn away the anger of God, and entreat for His mercy.

This is no dream of fancy, which we may adopt or set aside at pleasure. The laws of the Divine government are steadfast and unchangeable, whether we own them or deny them. We may blindly dash ourselves against them, but we cannot sweep them away. In every age the public conduct of rulers has been the hinge of Providence in the judgment or favour exercised to the country where they rule. Private sins, though multiplied, seldom bring down a national judgment, until they have been openly reflected and publicly adopted by answering sins on the part of the national leaders. When Eli, the judge and high-priest, though in person upright and pious, connived at the profaneness of his own sons, the Philistines triumphed, and Ichabod was written over the tents of Israel. When Zedekiah and his princes broke the public oath and covenant with the king of Babylon, and persecuted the prophets of God, the net of the spoiler was spread over them; their kingdom became a prey, the temple was burnt with fire, and the whole land was made a desolation.

When Israel sinned by pride of numbers, it is only when David adopts their sin, and numbers the people, that the stroke of judgment falls. It is when he pleads for mercy, and consecrates the site of the temple with prayers and offerings, that the Lord is entreated for the land, and the plague is stayed from Israel. When the king of Nineveh appointed a public fast, and himself with his princes took part in acts of repentance, the judgment threatened by the prophet was turned away. But when Belshazzar crowned a long course of national guilt by a public and daring insult to the God of heaven, the fatal handwriting appeared on the walls of the palace. His kingdom was numbered and finished, and Babylon fell, to rise no more.

The same truth is further taught in the laws of God, which refer to the detection and punishment of private crimes. We are taught plainly that these are charged on the nation, when they are not searched out and duly punished. But when all means for their detection have been used in vain, or when a just penalty has been enforced, then the State is clear from the fault. Unavenged murder defiles the land. But when, after due search, the murderer cannot be found, it is not imputed to the State, but to the unknown criminal. Thus we see that it is not the actions of rulers alone, which enter into the Divine economy of national mercy and judgment. Their neglect of known duty, or their connivance at the crimes of their subjects, also makes them guilty in the sight of heaven.

National sins, no less than private, need forgiveness. But forgiveness requires an atoning sacrifice, and repentance, by which the virtue of that atonement is claimed

and applied. Nations, then, are bound to repent publicly, like the Ninevites, of their national sins, to confess them at the mercy-seat of God, to profess their reliance on the atonement of Christ, and to anchor their hopes, as a nation, on the covenant of grace revealed to the whole world through His perfect sacrifice. To disclaim, nationally, all faith in that covenant and sacrifice is to cut themselves off, as a nation, from the only plea that can exempt them from judgment, and impiously to bare their own neck for the stroke of God's righteous anger. Whenever Christian kingdoms, in their public acts, refuse to acknowledge the Word of God, or to offer prayer in the name of the atoning Saviour, the judgments solemnly announced by the prophets must be near at hand; and those only may hope to be shielded in the day of trouble, who have striven against the downward course of delusion and apostasy; and have not denied the name of Christ, when multitudes and their rulers, in fatal blindness, loosen the bonds which once bound them to the footstool of God.

III. Nations, once more, receive daily countless gifts from the hand of God, which they are bound to acknowledge by solemn acts of praise and thanksgiving. Innumerable mercies, indeed, flow down to each individual citizen, as the dews of night on the valleys and hills. But there are many which result from the union of the nation, and in which individuals share, because they have first been given to the nation at large. Those natural features of a land which increase its plenty, or secure it from foreign violence, the fruitfulness of its harvests, the wisdom of its laws, its social peace, the discoveries of art among its citizens, the treasures of its literature, the prevalence



of order and liberty, the national provision for knowledge of Divine truth, and victories over enemies in earlier or later times, are some of these national blessings. The people of Israel were thus signally favoured in the days of old. Every Christian nation, and our own above the rest, has been enriched by similar benefits from the hand of God. If the ties of national cohesion were suspended for a moment, how large and rich an inheritance of mercy would suddenly pass away from us, and leave us, like forsaken infants, bare and desolate !

These national mercies, then, impose on every nation the duty of grateful thanksgiving. Their praise to God should be public and conspicuous, like the gifts He has bestowed. The State finds means to act like a single person, when it ordains laws for the common good, forms treaties of alliance, proclaims peace or war, and secures advantages for commerce, or rewards military success. Can it safely resolve itself into a mute and powerless abstraction, only to escape from the duty of national thankfulness to the Giver of all its mercies ? What should we think of a Federation formed on these conditions, that every State shall be free to plunder and harass foreign powers, and the Union bear no blame ; but that if one State be assailed, this shall be counted an act of war against the whole federation ? The conscience of mankind would flatly refuse to ratify a constitution so one-sided and unjust. When States receive the benefit of a national character, they must accept the responsibility. They cannot possibly be nations to receive benefits, and a mere anarchy of so many separate persons, when public obligations are to be fulfilled. The duties, then, of national



religion can only cease when nations cease to receive collective benefits from the hands of God. Let them renounce all the honour, greatness, peace, and abundance, which they obtain through God's own ordinance of civil government; and then, but not before, they may satisfy their conscience with the private services of religion alone. While one treaty protects their commerce, or one recollection of national exploits makes their hearts beat high with patriotic exultation, they are bound, publicly and officially, to own the hand of love by which these and all other blessings have been showered abundantly upon them.

This truth, which reason alone might prove, is confirmed by numerous testimonies of the Word of God. The book of Deuteronomy bears witness to it in almost every page. Thus David, as the head and king of the people, owned the mercies of God in their name, 'But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee! Now therefore, O our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.' Thus Nebuchadnezzar, when his madness passed away, and his reason returned, offered thanks to God, not only for personal blessings, but for all the glory of the kingdom: 'Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth and his ways judgment, and them that walk in pride he is able to abase.' In the same spirit Artaxerxes presented public offerings to avert God's displeasure from the whole empire: 'Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the honour of the God of

heaven; for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?' The same feature meets us everywhere in the promises and prophecies of the latter days: 'All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name: For thou art great and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone.'

But this duty, to be fulfilled aright, requires public and national faith in the Word of God. Without faith it is impossible to please Him. And hence the duty of religious worship, which belongs to rulers as chiefs of the State, implies an obligation to learn, by all accessible means, the character and will of the God whom they are thus bound to adore. This is their duty as individuals for their own salvation. But it is their duty also, as representatives of the State, that they may so worship as to avert the anger of God for sin, and to bring down upon the nation showers of Divine blessing. The superstructure, in their case, should be wider and higher than with common men, and it needs also a deeper foundation. True faith indeed is one main part of God's worship, and all the rest, without it, becomes a worthless shadow.

But wherever this faith lives in the heart of rulers, its results must be public worship rendered willingly, in every part of their high office, to Him who has placed them in their seats of power. When they seek to legislate for the welfare of the people, they must feel, like Solomon, their own ignorance, and lift up their prayers to the All-wise God, that He would endue them with grace, wisdom, and understanding. When they look around them, and see, in the state of the world, and even in their own laws, the

strength of human corruption, they will be led to offer the prayer for themselves and their people, 'Remember not against us our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers, neither take Thou vengeance of our sins.' When dark clouds are seen in the political horizon, they will not content themselves with the devices of mere worldly prudence, but will offer their supplications before heaven for national deliverance, as Hezekiah spread the letter of the boastful Assyrian before the Lord. When they have to execute justice, and to punish crime, they will hallow the judgment-seat by an open acknowledgment of His presence and authority, by whom 'kings reign, and princes decree justice.' On the bench, in the senate, and on the throne, there will be public thanksgivings to God, confession of sin, and prayer for His blessing. When this high standard is attained, every sentence of the earthly judge will be clothed with a Divine authority. The laws, in their very birth, will be rescued from the degrading influences of mere party strife, and imbued with a tone of deeper wisdom ; and the whole course of government be raised from a low, selfish, mercenary level, and bathed in the sweet influences of heaven.

When God is thus publicly honoured by the rulers of the nation, His promise will be fulfilled. The nation itself will be blessed and honoured, and receive public tokens of His favour and protecting love. The faith and zeal of Moses could turn aside a curse from a whole congregation of rebels. Whatever the amount of private ungodliness, its deserved judgment is usually withheld, while the fear of God prevails in high places, and a Daniel presides over the counsels, or a Josiah is seated on

the throne. But when growing iniquity drives truth from the seats of power, to weep over the pride of the nation in secret places, and finds its own image reflected in the scornful unbelief of statesmen, so that contempt for God's Word and indifference to His truth infects all the counsels of the State, then the cup of guilt is nearly full, and will soon overflow. That God, whom the nation has despised, will make known His power, and vindicate His despised authority, by some judgment on their sin. Distraction will be sent into their counsels, and the wisdom of their senators be turned into foolishness. Their harvests will be blighted, or their commerce struck with the palsy of fatal distrust. Their own sins will become their scourge, or foreign enemies be set loose to ravage and destroy; until the great truth, which its rulers have forgotten, is learned once more, that 'the Most High ruleth among the kingdoms of men,' and that 'verily there is a God who judgeth in the earth.'

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE RELIGIOUS PROVINCE OF RULERS.

CIVIL rulers are bound, as men, to receive and obey the Gospel. They are further bound, as the ministers of God for the good of the people, to base their laws on His revealed Word, to make His glory their aim, to borrow their maxims of legislation from the teaching of Scripture, to promote the education of their people—an education leavened and moulded in every part by Christian truth—and to offer public honour and worship to Almighty God, and to the risen Son of God, their Lord and Master in heaven. We are thus brought to the verge of a great question. Ought they, in their public office, to make the religious welfare of their subjects one direct and avowed aim of their government? Is this attempt a presumptuous intrusion, on their part, into a forbidden field? Is it not rather one main part of their high office, their duty to God, who has exalted them to power, and to the people over whom they rule?

Here, first of all, several misconceptions, which obscure the subject in many minds, must be cleared away. We do not ask whether rulers have a despotic power to



prescribe to their subjects, under severe penalties, what they shall believe. This parody of national religion has been styled ‘an infinite absurdity.’ Certainly it is infinitely wide of the real question. We have not to decide whether the ruler is to be a despot in religion, and the subject a mere slave; but whether he is to be a cipher, excluded, by a rigid law of duty, from all interference. Again, we do not inquire whether individual rulers are competent, in every case, or even in most cases, to occupy this province. Thousands of parents are morally unfit to govern and educate their children, but their duty is not altered by their sin. The public-house and gin-shop would then almost rival the dispensing powers claimed by the Bishop of Rome. Unbelief, immorality, and superstition, may unfit many rulers, in like manner, for any wise efforts for the spiritual good of their people. But this is no proof, nay, it is no presumption, that the duty does not exist. The abuse of a right, however frequent, is no bar to its existence; or else every right, public or private, would have been abolished long ago.

We do not seek at present to define the best means by which the ruler can fulfil this part of his duty, supposing it to be proved. Our aim is to settle the one question, whether the spiritual welfare of the people ought to be the direct and avowed aim of his government. When this is established, we can inquire, with less risk of prejudice, whether special means are wise and lawful, and even mistakes will be viewed with a more indulgent eye. The zeal may then be profitably employed in removing rubbish from the walls and courts of the national temple, which would else be wasted, and worse than wasted, in



efforts, like those of the old Edomites, to rase it to the ground.

Civil government may be viewed in three lights, as an historical fact, a social covenant, and a Divine ordinance. The Ruler is thus a father of the people, a trustee for the public good, and a minister and servant of God. Each view of his character will throw light on his true duty with regard to the religious welfare of the people.

I. Man does not enter the world in solitary independence, or with his reason mature. Each one begins his life as an infant, the member of some family. Domestic duties lie around him in his childhood, and are the cradle of his spirit from its birth. The family is the first social ordinance. It gives rise to a thousand obligations of honour and love, watchful care, brotherly affection, and filial obedience. Where these are fulfilled, it becomes at once the nursery and the type of the family in heaven.

Now States have plainly sprung out of this simpler and earlier bond of union. Families have enlarged into tribes, and tribes have swelled and grown into nations. In this enlargement fresh obligations have been contracted, and those have been enlarged which existed before.

The growth of the State out of the family, in the early ages of mankind, is an evident fact. But a correct view of civil society cannot be attained by regarding it in this one aspect alone. The king of a great nation has never exactly the same relation to his people as a father to his own children. Most of them are personally unknown to him; many are his elders in age; and the instincts of natural affection, often a powerful substitute for true benevolence, are here wholly absent. All that we can

affirm, without incurring just prejudice, is that the Family is the origin of the State, and supplies one main element by which to determine the office of the civil ruler.

The maxim, within these limits, is proved by the voice of conscience, the language of enlightened heathens, and the frequent testimony of the Word of God. The best heathen princes were styled 'fathers of the people' by their own subjects. Thus the Persians called Cambyzes a despot, but Cyrus father, because he approached to their conception of a perfect king. The Roman Senate were called 'the Conscrip Fathers.' Cicero, when he had served his country, and Titus, the delight of mankind, were styled by the gratitude of the people 'fathers of Rome.' The most delicate compliment Horace could pay Augustus is couched under the same phrase: '*Hic ames dici pater atque princeps.*' Natural conscience echoes the same truth, and whenever loyalty becomes intense toward an upright monarch, it assumes the terms, and copies even the emotions, of filial love.

The same lesson is taught plainly by the Scriptures themselves. All the nations of the earth are there said to have been patriarchal in their origin, and are named from their forefathers, as the chief bond that made them a separate people. Edom, Moab, Ammon, Amalek, Sidon, Lud, Javan, Sheba, Dedan, Asshur, are names common to the states and patriarchs from whom they spring. The same usage extends to the people of Israel, and to all their separate tribes. A usage so unvaried must speak its own lesson, that nations are only like larger families in the sight of God. Even the title itself is used repeatedly to express the relation between the ruler and his

people, as when Hezekiah called the priests and Levites his sons, and in the promise made to Eliakim, that he should be 'a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.' (2 Chron. xxix. 11 ; Isa. xxii. 21.)

If we consider the nature of the royal office, its paternal character is no less clear. Three main ideas meet in our conception of a father, natural affection, the authority of command, and superior wisdom. All these are no less essential in the idea of a good and perfect king. As the State grew first out of the family, so the higher it rises morally, the nearer it approaches to its first idea in a higher and nobler form. The love, the authority, and the wisdom of a father, may all be seen in a righteous monarch who cares for his people, and watches for their welfare in sincerity and truth. The enlargement of the household may lower the patriarch, first into the elder brother, and next into the prosperous adventurer among many selfish and ambitious rivals. But the laws of duty, faithfully observed, will, sooner or later, reverse this downward progress, and restore the wise and faithful ruler to his ideal dignity, as the father of a grateful and rejoicing people.

The Ruler, it is true, is not simply a parent. His office, in modern times, includes very different elements. It is enough that this element remains, however mixed with others ; or else he will sink into the tool of party strife, the puppet of ambition, and all the true honour of royalty will pass away. And since rulers ought to be fathers of their people, though not fathers merely, the promotion of religious truth and Christian piety must be one main part of their public duty. The resemblance is

only partial, but it is real ; and because it is real, the promotion of men's spiritual welfare is one chief part of the Christian Ruler's appointed office.

In the middle stages of human society it is true that this character of the kingly office is obscured. The parental relation is very dimly seen in the president of a commonwealth, or the limited monarch of a free people. Yet even here it is only latent. When obedience to rulers is the mere dictate of prudence, with no filial honour and reverence, the bonds of society are loosened, and it bears the marks of secret decay. But when princes rise above the cold routine of office, and devote themselves with generous ardour to the public good ; when they labour zealously for the happiness of the people, or risk their lives in the public cause, the consciences of men own the forgotten truth, and instinctive gratitude salutes them as the fathers of the people. Amidst political strife and worldly ambition this truth is still present, like treasure hid in the sand. In the dullest age one generous spirit, filled with the noble ambition of doing good to mankind, may bring it suddenly to light, and unseal, in ten thousand hearts, a gratitude and honour, like that of sons to a father, towards a patriot king.

II. Secondly, the State is the result of a social covenant. The resemblance to the family naturally becomes feebler in the course of time. The unity of race, and the claims of birthright, become lost in the mingling of different races, varieties of personal character, and the triumphs of ambition. A new power is needful to sustain the unity of the enlarging State, and secure the cohesion of the whole body. This power is found in national con-

sent, ratified, wherever needful, by public covenants, and is often styled, briefly, *THE SOCIAL COMPACT*.

When a loose multitude are thrown together, they soon feel the need of a government to restrain selfishness, to maintain the security of life, and the rights of industry. Some persons will be marked out, either by their birth, age, or ability, as best suited for the charge. A sense of the benefit thus obtained secures a general consent to their exercise of power. The custom of one age becomes the law of the next. Experience assigns certain limits of prerogative and freedom, and thus a legal government is slowly matured. The covenant may be silently formed at first, by the exercise of power and the habit of obedience. But in times of social debate the secret compact comes into clearer light, and embodies itself in fundamental laws, the basis of a settled constitution. And thus the consent of the people, silently given, or openly declared in public covenants, gives the sovereign power a new tenure, which modifies and absorbs its earlier form of patriarchal authority.

Did the Social Compact, then, viewed simply as a fact of history, exclude religious truth and its interests from the province of Christian rulers? The answer is plain. When the States of Christendom arose, no one dreamed of such an exclusion. It would have been held, by almost unanimous consent, to be absurd and impious. Princes and people were then of one mind, and the affairs of religion, and the wise regulation of national worship, were accounted among the first duties of a Christian king. The fundamental laws implied, in every case, that a large control in religious matters belonged of right to the supreme ruler.



But the fact that every national covenant was based on this view of the ruler's duty is no proof that it was lawful. Christian nations might have sinned, by consenting to a surrender of rights of private conscience, which ought to have been kept free from the touch of any earthly power. Here, however, the burden of proof lies on the advocates of separation. The Social Covenant, as an historical fact, recognises largely the Ruler's authority in religion. Unless it can be shown that this contradicts some universal law of moral duty, or some special ordinance of the Gospel, those who labour for its destruction are not only fighting against the truth of God's word, but even against the covenant of their own fathers.

It is very plain, first of all, that no moral law is broken, when religious authority of some kind is vested in the Ruler with the consent of the people. For God would never have enjoined on His chosen people what was sinful in its own nature. The Jewish kings exercised, and were bound to exercise, a direct authority in sacred things by the law of God himself. The consent of the people to such authority, within certain limits, cannot therefore be sinful in its own nature, but is right and praiseworthy.

This plain and decisive argument has been evaded in a manner that overlooks entirely the real question. That the Lord of heaven enjoined His own laws on the chosen people with their consent, is no proof, it is said, that rulers may impose what religion they please on unwilling subjects, especially on those who believe that obedience to them would be disobedience to God. But who has ever maintained such a folly? There is a wide interval between the extreme which makes rulers

capricious and omnipotent despots in religion, and one which despoils them of all power and right whatever, and thus condemns them to official atheism. Whoever treats these as the only alternatives has still to learn the first lessons of sound reasoning. The real argument is irresistible. The Lord of heaven, among the laws He enjoined on His people, included a large exercise of religious authority by their judges and kings. The exercise of such authority, then, by Christian kings, cannot be sinful in itself, but only by excess, misdirection, or abuse. No subject is bound to obey the command or advice of rulers in religion, simply because the command or advice is given. But their sin is greater, if the mere fact of the command being given, without any proof that the thing commanded is unlawful, is made a warrant for disobedience. What the Ruler enjoins may often be wrong; but to treat it as sinful, merely because he has enjoined it, is a strange and ruinous error.

It is still possible, however, that such interference might be sinful because of its contradicting some positive ordinance or bye-law of the Gospel. In this case there must be some command in the New Testament, which takes away one main portion of their office from pious rulers, and transfers it to the private will of their subjects, or else to the officers of the Church of Christ. Once those rulers were bound, even in religion, to command what was true and right, and encourage what was useful and expedient, and subjects were bound to obey their lawful commands, and, only when iniquity and idolatry were enforced, to protest and disobey. It must be proved, on the present alternative, that the Gospel

bids rulers abdicate this part of their office, and permits subjects to propagate religious or irreligious doctrines, socially ruinous, or to utter the foulest blasphemies against the name of God, and still to claim entire exemption from all control. But no such innovation in the relative duty of rulers and subjects can be found in the New Testament. It supplies both with clearer means of knowing the truth, and a higher standard of religious duty, but leaves their relative position otherwise unaltered. The Christian Ruler must still be ‘just, ruling in the fear of God.’ The Christian subject must still render obedience to all commands not positively sinful, and in these must apply the maxim, to obey God rather than man.

The Social Compact, then, in recognising a religious authority in the Christian Ruler, sins against no law of universal right, and transgresses no special ordinance of the Gospel. But would a compact on an opposite principle be lawful, even if made? May a nation, without sin, stipulate that rulers shall wholly exclude all care for the faith and worship of their subjects from their trust, and then yield up their personal liberty to the claims of social order under this condition? Such a covenant is void in its own nature. To propose it is unlawful. Its acceptance, on the part of rulers, is a still greater sin.

The Christian is not his own master. He is a steward, responsible to God for every gift he has received. One supreme law is binding on his conscience in every sphere of action:—‘Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your body and your spirit which are God’s.’ When he becomes the subject of a heathen or irreligious

state, this obligation rests on him still with unabated force. He must obey God rather than man, at whatever cost, and refuse compliance with every command of rulers which contradicts the laws of God. In all other things he must be subject even to ungodly or heathen rulers, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake. He is freed by this rule from all needless scruples about the motives or conduct of those in power. He is to look beyond the corruption of God's ordinance to the design for which it was appointed; and should pray hopefully for kings and all who are in authority, that they may rise nearer and nearer to the high standard of His perfection, who is the only Ruler of princes, 'the Prince of the kings of the earth.'

When, however, the Christian takes part in a social compact, he is brought within the range of a deeper obligation. He may submit to an idolatrous or infidel ruler, because God has enjoined and authorised submission. But since he is a steward for Christ, he may not, by his own act, resign any part of his natural liberty into hands that disown his Lord. He is bound to use all that he is, and all that he has, for the glory of God in Christ. Two conditions, then, are needful, before he can lawfully cede any of his own powers and rights to others. Those who receive them must profess allegiance to the same Master, and own themselves bound, like Himself, to use them in His service. And those who resign them must believe that it will be used more effectually for the same object, when transferred to other hands. The surrender of personal rights, on other terms, would be the treacherous abandonment of a sacred and solemn trust.

In the social covenant every subject cedes part of the control over his property and his actions to the will of the elected ruler. Consent to this transfer, open or implied, is the essence of the compact. But whenever it is stipulated that the Ruler shall not use this power with any direct regard to the objects of Christ's kingdom, such consent must be an act of treachery, on the part of the Christian, against the just authority of Christ. He becomes a faithless steward, who takes the goods of his master, and transfers them to an alien. All that he so resigns is purloined from the Son of God. It was previously held under the inviolable law, that it must be used in the service of the living God, and for the advancement of His spiritual kingdom. It is now placed under an opposite and rival code, to be used only for worldly ends, in which the law of God is shut out of sight, and no regard is paid to the welfare of souls, or preparation for the life to come. This is open treason against the King of kings.

The Christian Ruler must be still more guilty, who accepts a trust confided to him on such ignominious terms. No law of God permits him to define himself into two persons, one of whom is to do all things to the glory of Christ, and the other is to be strictly neutral between Christ and Belial, between the truth of God and doctrines of devils, and to have exclusive regard to the things of this world alone. The command to do all things to the glory of God is plain and clear. No subtle distinction can thrust it out from the bench of justice, the halls of legislation, and the high places of royal power. All these need to be hallowed by direct and open submission to the Word of God, and made to minister to the great work for



which the Son of God came into the world—the redemption and moral recovery of immortal souls. Whenever this aim is formally renounced and set aside, the pestilence of national ungodliness has appeared. Wrath is gone out from the Lord, the plague is begun.

No compact or confederacy, in which total ungodliness is the fundamental law of the State, can be really binding in the sight of Heaven. The duty of outward submission may still continue, however corrupt the constitution of the State may be. But all willing consent to such a covenant, in which the truth of God is rejected from the national councils, and strict and absolute religious equality set up for a primal law, would be apostasy from the living God, the Supreme Governor of all the kingdoms of the world.

The Social Covenant, then, in every nation, has actually conferred a large trust of religious authority on the rulers of the State. This invariable element is neither unlawful in itself, nor forbidden by any positive law of the Gospel. On the contrary, one in which the Ruler is forbidden to recognise any difference between God's truth and the worst religious errors, between the authority of Christ, the risen Son of God, and the claims of the vilest deceiver, would be void in its own nature. No Christian could take part in it without sin, no Ruler accept its terms without still deeper guilt. It would be a league with death, a covenant with hell.

One such covenant, and perhaps only one, the world has seen in the whole range of its eventful history. A nation, once Christian, publicly cast off the yoke of Christ, and openly defied the God of heaven. The Social Compact,

for the first time, was freed from every trace of national religion. The result was bloodshed without limit, crime, and misery. National faith and private piety seemed to have expired together. Open scorers seized on the reins of power, and crime followed crime with unexampled rapidity. The return of an effete superstition, and the stern despotism of the sword, seemed a relief from the horrors of that atheism, by which all religious faith was banished from the national councils.

These events have a loud voice of warning for the present generation. The unconscious errors of upright men are not to be confounded with the mad impiety of open scorers. But still we are bound to reject theories, however amiable their advocates, or however specious their disguise, which conduct, by force of logical consistency, to issues so fearful. If rulers are to be religiously neutral, and never to own the authority of God, nor to spend one thought on the religious welfare of their people, they will be far more consistent if they proclaim themselves disciples of the Positive Philosophy, and that chance or fate is the only God, and death an eternal sleep. To believe that this life is only a vapour and a dream, compared with the life to come, and that there is a God before whom all nations are only as the dust of the balance; and still to insist that the Social Covenant shall be stripped bare of every religious element, must be a sacrilegious folly. Its advocates lie under stroke of that severe rebuke of the prophet, 'Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Wherefore do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, in profaning the covenant of our fathers?'

III. Civil government, in its origin, is an enlargement and variation of parental authority; and, viewed as a human ordinance, is based on a social compact, either openly expressed or secretly implied. But there is a third and higher view of its nature, to which the Scriptures plainly lead us. Kingly power is the ordinance of God. He has defined the laws of social duty for rulers and subjects, and invested magistrates with a share of His own authority. 'There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God.' 'Promotion cometh neither from the east nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the Judge. He putteth down one, and setteth up another.' His eyes, patriarchs have taught us long ago, are with kings upon the throne; He establishes them for ever, and they are exalted. This truth meets us in every part of the sacred history, and is inwoven into the whole texture of the Word of God.

A right view of civil government is thus one main element of sound doctrine, an integral, if not an essential part, of the Christian faith. To degrade it below its true standard is an offence against Christ himself, the King of kings. The first principles of the faith alone, heartily received, may suffice for high degrees of personal zeal and piety. But unless we see clearly the duties of rulers, as defined in the word of God, and have our thoughts habitually moulded by this part of Divine truth, we may, in our social and political conduct, play the part, unconsciously, of anarchs and atheists. We may seek to divorce what God's wisdom and providence have joined inseparably, and pull down, when we ought to build up, the walls of His Jerusalem. The like ignorance, on the

other side, may lead us to confound mere inventions and additions of men with Divine ordinances, and to resent as a sacrilege even wise attempts to clear away the rubbish from the outer walls of the temple of God.

The State is a Divine ordinance, and the Ruler is a minister of God. This is the highest and noblest aspect of civil government. He, who created man at the first, implanted the social instincts, which lead to the union of tribes and the growth of larger kingdoms. He has not only sanctioned them by His providence, but has prescribed the laws of social duty, and has enforced and limited the obedience of subjects and the authority of rulers and kings. Causeless rebellion against earthly sovereigns is thus branded with the guilt of treason against God.

But this truth, which is essential to a Christian view of civil government, needs to be cleared from a dangerous abuse. 'The right divine of kings to govern wrong' has become a by-word of reproach to scorners; and even Christians have excused themselves for renouncing an eternal truth, because it has been incrustated with superstitious errors. The divine authority of rulers, truly explained, implies no exclusive sanction to any one form of government; still less does it involve the indefeasible right of some one family in each nation to the possession of absolute power. It absolves neither the governor nor his subjects from the eternal laws of morality, by placing the liberties of the people at the mercy of the caprice or passions of a perjured tyrant. It may still be lawful, in extreme cases, to maintain the royalty of law against the suicidal guilt of a Ruler, who breaks his own covenant,

and virtually abdicates his solemn trust. The principle does not exclude the consent of the people in the choice of their rulers, where the constitution allows it, or determine what form of government is most useful to the State, and most pleasing to God. It is a gross abuse of the doctrine, when it is supposed to establish the claims of despotic power, by Divine authority, on the ruin and overthrow of all social freedom.

The doctrine that civil power is the ordinance of God leaves the form of the constitution and the choice of the rulers to be decided by the laws and usages of each particular State. But when that selection is made, it throws over rulers the shield of Divine authority, and teaches their subjects to obey for conscience sake, out of reverence for God's appointment. It bids the Ruler look upon his office as a sacred trust from the Most High, for which he is strictly accountable to Him alone, and thus raises him above the fear of man by an expectation of the judgment-seat of heaven. It restrains the selfish passions of men, and forbids them to sin by rash censure of their magistrates, and calumnious reproaches against Him who has set these stars, with His own hand, in the firmament of power. It rescues the kingly office from those superficial theories which would lower and degrade its functions, to suit the lawless fancies of an unbelieving age. It reminds us that the office of the Ruler has been defined by God himself, and that it must be learned from the precepts and examples of His word; and neither from the adulation of servile flatterers, nor from debasing and infidel theories, that would thrust out God entirely from the government of this lower world.



The Scriptures assign to our Lord three distinct offices—the Prophet, the Priest, and the King. In patriarchal times these seem to have been more or less united in the person of the first-born. They will meet once more, and be combined, in that kingdom of glory in which our Lord shall sit and rule upon His throne, and shall be a priest on His throne, while a law proceeds from His mouth, and His judgment is the light of the people. But in the ordinary course of things these offices are actually separate, and are intrusted to distinct persons. Even here, however, the separation is partial, and two of the three often meet in the same person. Melchizedec was the king of Salem and a priest of the Most High God. Moses, one of the greatest of the prophets, was also ‘king in Jeshurun.’ David was the king of God’s own choice, the founder of the royal line, and also a great prophet, the sweet Psalmist of Israel. In later times the high-priests were the chief rulers of the Jewish people. Of the four greater prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, two were also priests, and a third, though not actually a king, held the highest civil powers and offices, even in a heathen empire. But still the separation, in part at least, has been maintained, and the three offices have been too weighty to be held at once by the same person.

Traced to their source, these three offices flow from three Divine attributes—wisdom, holiness, and power. The prophet is a teacher of Divine wisdom. The priest, as the name imports in the sacred language, is a minister of God’s holiness, while holiness itself is the outward aspect of love and goodness in its contrast with evil. The king represents God’s power and sovereign autho-

city. Each office has its own character; but though distinct, they are closely united. And the nearer any one approaches its true ideal, the more closely it must blend with the others; as power, wisdom, and love meet in the pure glory of the Divine and perfect Goodness.

This view of each office explains also the diversity of the means they employ, and of the outward features they assume. The work of the priest consists merely in sacrifices of prayer, by which blessings are drawn down from the Fountain of love, and sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, wherein the love of the creature may rise in adoration to the throne of God. The work of the prophet or teacher is to convey messages of Divine wisdom from heaven to earth, or unfold and apply those already given. The province of the king is, by rewards and punishments, to exercise some part of God's moral government and supreme authority, and thus to repress all that is hurtful and hateful, and encourage all things pure, lovely, and of good report.

These offices, then, though distinct from each other, and wisely separate, in the hands of fallible men, must borrow from each other most largely as they approach nearest to the standard of perfection. It was one mark of superiority in our Lord's teaching that 'He spake with authority, and not as the scribes.' The prophet or teacher, who feels the supremacy of truth, will speak instinctively in tones of authority, which reveal in him, however disguised and varied, the majesty of a king. The priest who intercedes for others, or offers their prayers and thanksgivings to God, will need the wisdom of the prophet for the due fulfilment of his task; while a heart full

of holy love must have more true royalty than pride, passion, or violence, though armed with the sword of power. It was by prayer, a priestly work, that Jacob gained the name of Israel, because as a prince he had power with God, and prevailed. So also the kingly office, to resemble the Divine royalty, must clothe itself with prophetic wisdom, and be hallowed by a kind of priestly consecration. The monarch only rises to his true dignity, when he discerns, like a prophet, the true laws of social happiness, and in deep longing for the welfare of the people comes to intercede for them, like David of old, in the presence of God.

The separation of these offices, then, is due to human infirmity. States have enlarged more rapidly than the capacities of sinful men. The offices have been parted, that each might be easier to fulfil, and also be a safeguard against the abuse of the others. Duties of an external kind have been assigned distinctly to each office. The priest under the law was bound, first of all, to minister at the altar; and only when those duties were fulfilled could he devote himself to those priestly functions, which borrow more largely from the wisdom of the prophet or the authority of the judge and king. The Christian pastor, whose direct calling and Scripture title is that of prophet or teacher, is first to instruct the people of his charge in the elements of the Christian faith; and only when this work is satisfied may he rise to the task of enforcing those truths, which are the laws of national wisdom, and instruct princes to rule in the fear of God, and to frame their laws as subjects of the King of kings. The magistrate is, in the first place, to administer justice in its simpler and

runder forms for the repression of open crime. Only when this lower work has been fulfilled can he rise to a higher sphere of duty, which calls him to raise the moral tone of his people, and to promote among them true religion ; or, like David, to mingle priestly intercession and public offerings to God with the direct exercise of royal power.

There are thus two restrictions on which the due separation of these offices depends. The first requires the priest, the magistrate, or the Christian teacher, to fulfil first the peculiar outward duties of his own special calling, and to rise through their fulfilment, not by their neglect, to functions of a higher or larger kind. The second forbids them to intrude on those functions which mark out and specify a different office. Thus Uzziah was punished for intruding into the priest's court of the temple to burn incense ; and our Lord, in His earthly life, as a prophet, refused to accept the proper work of the judge. But still the prophet, the priest, or the king, in proportion as he is faithful to his trust, and knows the true ideal at which to aim, must rise into that higher sphere where these three offices mingle, like the primary colours in the rainbow, in the perfect harmony of royal authority, prophetic wisdom, and priestly holiness and love. The teacher will then teach as with the authority of a king, and mingle with his instructions prayers and intercessions. The priest, while he ministers in holy things amidst the sacramental rites of religion, will keep its ritual from sinking into a worthless routine by the perpetual infusion of Divine truth, and will separate with royal authority, as God's minister, between things holy and profane. The monarch, while he represses open crime and decides the causes of

the people, or dispenses the honours of the State, will infuse into his laws a spirit of truth and holiness, and seek to consecrate the nation and all its substance to its highest and noblest aim—the willing service and holy worship of the God of Heaven.

These remarks will unite the scattered lessons of God's word on the nature of the kingly office, and thus guide us to a just view of the province of the Christian Ruler. The separation of the three offices is due to human weakness, is temporary and partial; but their union is deep, intimate, vital, and everlasting. To treat them as wholly separate, and to labour practically to make a total revolution in Christian States, which, in the name of religious equality, strips them of all religion whatever, would be a reflection and echo of the sin and folly which should strive to make a schism in the Divine attributes, and to dis sever power from its union with love, holiness, and wisdom, in the bosom of the Supreme and Eternal King.



## CHAPTER IX.

## SCRIPTURAL OBJECTIONS TO NATIONAL RELIGION.

THE duty of Christian rulers to use their authority for the advancement of true religion has been vehemently denied, in modern times, by a large number of Christian men. The principle has been said to contradict the lessons of the New Testament, and to have had a perilous and deadly influence on the Church of Christ. Before entering on the direct evidence of Scripture in its favour, it may be well to examine the chief reasons which have been urged on the other side. This is the more needful from the tone of excessive and unseemly confidence in which the appeal to Scripture has been made by some of the zealous adversaries of Established Churches.

The words of our Lord before Pilate are the most frequent and popular argument for the negative theory of State neutrality. They have therefore been examined at the outset, and shown to be really subversive of the doctrine they are so often quoted to prove by superficial readers. Two other chief objections remain, drawn directly from the New Testament. The first is our Lord's answer to the Pharisees on the question of tribute money.

The second is derived from the history of the Apostolic Church, and the evident fact that no civil ruler then patronised the Christian faith. A further argument, less directly Scriptural, has been founded on the supposed claims of private conscience. When these have been examined and set aside, the way will be open for a view of the direct evidence of Scripture, from first to last, which confirm the great duty of national worship and of a public acknowledgment of Christ and His word by the princes and rulers of the earth.

I. The words of our Lord to the Pharisees: ‘Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s,’ have been turned into one main argument for the theory, which requires a total divorce between civil government and the ordinances of the Church of Christ. The reasoning is of this kind. The things of Cæsar must include all duties of civil obedience; and the things of God, the higher obligations of faith and religious worship. These are here set in contrast, and each is made to rest on a separate foundation. They ought, then, to be kept equally distinct in the policy of States, and in the conscience of every Christian. Civil rulers ought not to interfere with matters of religion, which belong only to private conscience, nor to intrude into a sanctuary, sacred to God alone. The two spheres have nothing in common. One of them terminates in the interests of this life, the other reaches forward into the life to come. National establishments of religion break down the barrier which Christ has established. Cæsar intrudes into the things of God, and the rights of citizens to equal justice are encroached on by

the claim of some dominant creed to ascendancy and protection.

The things of Cæsar, it is here assumed, are a simple and absolute contrast to the things of God. Each is parted from the other by an impassable boundary. But what warrant is there, either in Scripture or sound reason, for such a view? 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.' How can Cæsar, and the things of Cæsar, be exempt from His ownership who is the Lord of heaven and earth? David, at least, could have had no suspicion of such a formal separation of rights, when he uttered that noble confession over the offerings of Israel, 'Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thy holy name cometh of thine hands, and is all thine own.' He here proclaims an eternal and unchangeable truth. What room can there be for the alleged antithesis, when the things of Cæsar are all, without exception, things that belong also to God? The contrast, when examined closely, melts away and disappears.

Some limitation of the contrast, then, needs to be introduced. Calvin remarks on the passage as follows. 'The partition does not seem to be suitable, because, to speak properly, while we perform our duty to man, we yield obedience to God. But Christ suited His discourse to the vulgar capacity, and counted it enough to distinguish the spiritual kingdom of God from political

order, and the state of the present life.' But he soon modifies this explanation so as to entirely set aside the idea of any total contrast. 'The sum is that since there are rebels against God who subvert political order, obedience to princes and magistrates must ever be joined with the worship and fear of God; but, on the other hand, if princes usurp anything that belongs to God, they must be obeyed only as far as to the altars.'

The antithesis, then, in these words, if they contain an antithesis, can only be limited and partial, or they would contradict the most fundamental truths. But there is nothing in their form which compels us to adopt this view of their meaning. The two clauses are more like a climax than a mere antithesis. The lower duty is plainly included in the higher, while this inclusion implies of itself a partial contrast.

In the first place, there is no doubt a partial antithesis. The first claim of Cæsar is contrasted with the unreal, imaginary claims of religious privilege, which the Pharisees set up for themselves. The payment of tribute to Cæsar was a real obligation, and must be fulfilled. Refusal to pay was no duty to God, as their pride led them to suppose, but rather an offence and rebellion against God also. They were not to invent religious duties for themselves, and to treat these as one main part of true religion. God would not accept such will-worship, the cloak of a stubborn and rebellious heart. 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,' the tribute you are bound to pay; 'and unto God the things that are God's,' the duties He has really enjoined, and not the

specious inventions of will-worship, or the proud claim to entire exemption from heathen rule.

Now on what ground did the Pharisees scruple to pay tribute to Cæsar? Clearly from ecclesiastical, or, as they thought, from Scriptural reasons. The Jews were the chosen people of God. No place was found for heathen rule in the primitive constitution, the laws of Moses. The high-priest and sanhedrim, in their view, were of Divine appointment, and other rule was only an usurpation. Cæsar, in their eyes, was the guilty intruder on a province sacred to the God of Israel, where He alone, acting through the priests He had ordained in the law, ought to be obeyed. They did not appeal to the mere love of political liberty. Their scruples were due rather to a subtle form of spiritual pride, which could not brook any control of an idolatrous emperor over the seed of Abraham, and appealed from expediency and worldly prudence to the primitive standing of the Jewish church in the days of their fathers.

There is here an exact parallel to the lessons of that negative theory, which these words have falsely been supposed to confirm. In these last days of the Gentile Church, as in the last days of the Jewish, claims have been set up which forbid all interference of the civil ruler. The Church of Christ, it is said, is degraded and wronged if civil governors, even though professing Christians, exercise any authority within its pale. The appeal is made to primitive times. Tributes have been refused, not on the ground that they were excessive or illegal, but because Cæsar has no right to intermeddle with the Church of God. The differences almost compensate each



other, and leave the moral lesson unaltered. If Cæsar claimed only outward tribute and political control, he was also a heathen, and had only an outward and political admission into the Holy Land. If the authority of civil rulers, in modern times, has seemed to trench more deeply on the freedom of the Church, it is because they have first entered within the Church's precincts by an open profession of the Christian faith. The ground of scruple is the same in either case. A foreign power, unknown in the first ages, and not directly enjoined in the law of Moses or the Gospel of Christ, has claimed and exercised control over the visible Church. The words of our Lord are a powerful rebuke to the counter claim of imaginary privilege. The facts of Providence, he teaches us, bring with them their own obligation. Obedience must be the rule, resistance only the rare exception, reserved for the cases in which commands evidently sinful are imposed. In all other cases the command will apply even in these days, 'Render to civil rulers a willing assent and obedience in all their ordinances, which do not contradict some higher law that God has plainly revealed.'

But the words of Christ are a climax even more than a contrast. The Pharisees actually paid the tribute; but they paid it with reluctance, and only waited for some favourable moment to throw off the Roman yoke. They had high views of their dignity as the chosen people, and fretted under this foreign dominion which God had brought upon their nation because of its sin. The present, however, did not seem a convenient time for insurrection. They were content to nurse their hopes in secret, and to yield outward obedience to the

claims of Cæsar. Their hope was to entangle our Lord between opposite dangers, and either to accuse Him to Pilate for open sedition, or to the populace as a betrayer of their national liberty, and an abettor of the Roman usurpation. Our Lord, by His answer, not only makes the justice of His decision clear to the senses of the people, but exposes the sin of His accusers, and sets their real duty plainly before them. ‘The tribute you pay has the image and superscription of Cæsar. You accept the use of his money in your daily traffic ; and, since this proves that you derive actual benefit from his rule, you are bound to pay him what is really his own. But it is God’s Providence which has brought you under Cæsar’s dominion. The fact that your coin in daily use bears his image proves this clearly to your senses. Do not, then, like Zedekiah, rebel against God’s appointment, but submit to His mighty hand ; till He himself, on your repentance, shall free you from the foreign yoke which rests upon you for your iniquities. Your duty to Cæsar is to pay the tribute which bears his image. Your duty to God is to pay it with a willing mind. Render, then, to Cæsar the things of Cæsar by due payment of the tribute which has his image and superscription ; and unto God the things of God, by humble and ready submission to His hand which has been thus righteously laid upon you.’ Thus our Lord not only decides the question of the outward payment in a way which silenced the prejudices of the people, but exposed the secret sin of His adversaries in the rebellion of their heart against the will and appointment of God.

The meaning of the words is still more evident, when

we compare them with the inspired comment in Rom. xiii., where St. Paul unfolds the duty of obedience to civil rulers. He there connects the outward obligation to pay tribute with the more spiritual duty of a willing submission to the ordinance of God. 'Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also, for they are God's ministers, attending continually on this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. Owe no man anything but to love one another.'

Here the same climax is implied. Christians must be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake. The payment of tribute is thus made a religious duty, because rulers are the ministers of God. The actual payment renders to Cæsar the things of Cæsar, but only willing submission to a Divine ordinance can render to God the things of God. And thus our Lord's answer is in full harmony with David's thanksgiving. The outward largeness of the offering, and the inward willingness of the hearts of the people, are there made a double motive for adoration and praise.

The ordinances, then, of society, and the laws of the kingdom of God, are not wholly separate. The first are like the hills and valleys of earth; and the other are like the all-pervading sunlight, which fills them with fruitfulness and beauty. The sunlight is not degraded when it rests upon the valleys of earth; nor even when its rays mingle with the earth on which it shines, so as to fill the air with the melody of birds, to enrich the

flowers with their various colours, and ripen the harvests for the use of man. If we could forbid the union of the sunlight with the earth under the pretence of keeping it more pure, the world would be turned into a barren and wintry desert. So it is with the things of Cæsar and the things of God. Divine truth needs to mould, penetrate, and sustain the whole frame of society, and all its institutions, or the kingdoms of the world will soon degenerate into a dreary waste of spiritual darkness.

II. The character and history of the New Testament Church have been held to supply a second argument against national establishments. But however decisive some have conceived it to be, the nature of the reasoning is not very easy to apprehend.

First of all, it is said to be a plain fact that no civil ruler, in the time of the Apostles, took any direct share in the regulation of the Christian Church. And this fact is next affirmed to constitute an universal law of duty, binding on every later age. To depart from it subverts the ordinance of Christ, and replaces it by the inventions of man. The Church was then self-endowed, self-sustained, self-extending, its resources within itself, its expansive energies within itself, its sole reliance for the protection of its existence, the supply of its treasury, the success of its efforts, not on the favour or policy or wealth or might of the governments of the world; but on the love, the power, the wisdom, and the faithfulness of its exalted Head, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. He ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. The appointment was clear. The voluntary support of the Gospel by the Church itself is as much an ordinance of

Christ as the Lord's Supper. A compulsory support by the State displaces a Divine ordinance, and sets up in its room a corrupt invention of men."

If it be said that the circumstances did not then admit of national Christianity, this is met by an indignant reply. 'Circumstances did not admit of it! as if there were any circumstances not under the absolute dominion of Omnipotence! The sentiment involves no ordinary presumption, it enfolds the embryo of atheism. Were they unforeseen or unprovided for on the part of Him, whose entire course of Providence was subservient to the great events of the fulness of time? The Most High was introducing a new economy. Must we not suppose that He would place it on the footing on which He intended it to continue? All the agency was Divine, and to Him all things were possible.'

In this reasoning of Dr. Wardlaw the contrast between facts and duties is very strangely, not to say absurdly, forgotten. No king or ruler had then believed, or used his authority to help the spread of the Gospel. We maintain that they were bound, first to receive and obey it for themselves, and next, after receiving it, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, with a direct aim at the widest and fullest reception, by their subjects, of its saving and quickening truth. The former duty is allowed, the latter is vehemently denied. The reason offered for this denial is the fact that no ruler then took part in the Church's affairs. But this must equally prove that no ruler ought to have embraced the Gospel. The objection strangely turns their actual unbelief into a perpetual ordinance of the Church of Christ. It would prove not only



their official countenance of the Church in later times, but their conversion itself, to have been a sinful departure from the divinely ordered state of things in Apostolic times.

Two things, it is plain, are not only distinct, but opposite, the maxims which the Gospel enforces, and the evils it was designed to remedy. To confound these is a fatal error. The unbelief of kings, and its inevitable fruit, their incompetence and unwillingness to promote the spiritual welfare of their subjects, is one of the worst and sorest evils the Gospel was sent to cure. That this evil shall be removed is also one of its first and chiefest promises. (Isa. xlix. 7 ; Acts, xiii. 47.) Even then it was the duty of emperors and kings to believe in Christ ; and, believing in Him, to become His servants in the great work of spreading His righteous dominion through the world. Their faith itself was the grand innovation, and drew with it unavoidably further changes, in their attempts to fulfil the high duties laid upon them by the King of kings. To approve the cause, and condemn its necessary consequences, is a folly unworthy of Christian men.

Let us test the objection by a few examples. When the Epistles were written, our country had not yet received the Gospel. Is it a sinful departure from the primitive model, when British Christians use the ships, the science, and the power of our country, to spread the Gospel among the heathen, because those means were not employed in its first propagation ? Must we now renounce all the aid of British commerce, because Druids and their human sacrifices were then the religion of our island ? Are we to reason that the Almighty could have called British wealth and commerce into being in the days of

the Apostles, if He really designed such agency to be used in spreading His truth? Must we desert our missionary societies, because no subscription lists or committees are found in the New Testament? Printing was then unknown. Have printers corrupted the Divine ordinance, and intruded rashly into sacred things, because the press has been used in spreading truths, which the Apostles published only by manuscripts and oral teaching? In all such cases, and a hundred more, the same objection equally applies; and its only effect is to call evil good, and good evil, so as utterly to confuse and pervert the laws of duty, and the conscience of Christian men.

An appeal to the Divine Omnipotence is of all arguments perhaps the most delusive. If the Almighty could have converted rulers by a miracle at the day of Pentecost, He could equally, by a miracle, have hindered the rise of civil establishments in later years. If the fact of their rise, in the latter case, cannot of itself prove them lawful, so neither will the fact that Nero lived and died an unbelieving persecutor prove that Christian rulers have no proper concern in the affairs of religion, or that they sin against the revealed will of God, when they consecrate their power to the good of His Church, and the glory of His holy name.

But would not the Most High be likely to introduce the new economy on the footing on which it was designed to continue? The question is ambiguous. If it refers to the doctrines of the Gospel, and its maxims of duty, these are doubtless the same in every age. If it refers to details of government, and the relation of the Church

to civil rulers, these were not less clearly open to great change. The Tabernacle was built by God's express command, and the Law was given, when Israel dwelt in tents in the wilderness. Yet it was equally God's will that the same Church should receive a settled habitation, and the Temple was built, under God's approval, with the sanction and active co-operation of the Jewish kings. A similar change in the outward state of the Christian Church has thus the plainest warrant of Scripture precedent.

The truth lies here between opposite extremes. There is a false theory of development, which would remove the old landmarks, and justify the worst apostasy as a conservative addition to the Christian faith. There is a view hardly less dangerous, and more unnatural, which would freeze down the Church and the world into the state in which the Gospel found them. The rule of the faith has been completed once for all, and admits of no development. It has been sealed by a parting curse and blessing from the Spirit of God. The truths of the Gospel and the great laws of Christian duty are equally incapable of change. But the apprehension of them by the whole Church, or by individual believers, may vary greatly, and either increase or decline. It may develop into fuller light, or fade into dim twilight; though God's promise assures us that it will never die away, till the light of the resurrection dawns on the world. The details, also, of Christian duty, and their various combinations, depend greatly on the changes of time. The Church cannot retain its outward form unvaried, unless by a grievous sacrifice of its inward life, and great un-

faithfulness to the voice of Providence. When once rulers embraced the Gospel, the laws of eternal duty required new arrangements, that all parts of the Church might labour together wisely, in their various stations, for the glory of their common Lord. The Church and the World were not to remain in the state, which met the eye of the beloved John in his lonely Patmos exile. Fresh nations were to hear and receive the Gospel, Fresh classes of men were to submit to its authority. Fresh fields of thought were to own its blessed influence, and yield their tribute of myrrh and frankincense to the risen Son of God. The cradle of Bethlehem could not contain Him who ascended far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. The upper room at Jerusalem could not be the lasting boundary of that Church, which was to spread throughout all nations. The primitive kiss of charity was to melt into a thousand altered forms, in the effluence of Christian courtesy, and the salutations of Christian love. The political relations of the Church could not remain unaltered, when once the prophecy was fulfilled, that 'kings should see and arise, and princes also worship' at the footstool of Christ. The shifting curtains of the tabernacle had then to be replaced by a larger temple, and a national worship, to which Tyre might send her tribute, and kings present their royal offerings; even though the danger might follow that new Ahabs and Jezebels might arise, and its outer court be trodden down by hypocrisy and unbelief. In the Church, as in the world, the stream of heavenly love can never be frozen in its course, or return backward to its fountain. The river from the sanctuary must widen continually as

it flows. The Family, first of all, and next the State, were to be fertilised and renewed by its living stream. The Gospel found the family ordinance corrupted with vice, selfishness, and immorality. One of its earliest works was to raise it from its ruin, and thus to spread peace and love through the quiet homes of domestic life. But it was also, in due time, to girdle with its calm and ennobling influence the institutions of civil society, the seats of legislation, the tribunals of magistrates, and the palaces of kings; until earthly monarchs, ruling in the name of Christ, and enriched and ennobled by His wisdom, should raise their government into a nearer and nearer resemblance of His glorious and heavenly kingdom.



## CHAPTER X.

## THE CLAIMS OF PRIVATE CONSCIENCE.

Two further objections to National Religion have been drawn from the supposed claims of private conscience; and again, from the freedom of the Gospel and the spiritual independence of the Christian Church. The first of these has been strongly urged by Professor Vinet, in his *Essay on the Duty of professing Religious Convictions*. The weight of his name and the fervour of his style seem to call for a full examination of his argument, however little worthy, in my opinion, either from its logical force or any show of scriptural evidence, of the applause and approval by which it has been too widely received. The objection runs thus, nearly in his own words:—

‘The duty of a religious profession, on the part of every private Christian, is a plain and evident truth. But every duty implies also a right, and every right demands guarantees for its own exercise. It is true that the consciousness of the right is its own best guarantee, but we should be rash were we to conclude that it has nothing to demand from the institutions of society. The Divine

wisdom never abandons duty to itself, but always sustains it with outward supports. We must not affect to be wiser than God.'

The duty, then, of the individual is to declare his faith, and it cannot be that of society to prohibit the declaration. Right cannot be opposed to right, duty to duty, necessity to necessity. There can be no lawful conflict between society and conscience.

It is true that the inviolability of conscience, in all its possible forms, would involve the destruction of society. But still, in the negation of conscience, the whole moral being would perish, and all that remained in the hands of society would be a *caput mortuum* without life. Society does well to reprove or punish actions contrary to the principle of its nature. The State has promoted her own peace, when, without regarding the principles which gave them birth, she has dealt her blows against anti-social actions, or when she has severely punished crime, erecting itself into doctrine. But when authority has invaded the spiritual domicile of the individual, and sought to silence conviction on fundamental and strictly personal subjects, with reference to the invisible, the infinite, and the immortal, then human liberty has aroused itself to repel the impious aggression. The State has been convulsed; experience has spoken long and loudly, and by the violation of the right the right has been made apparent.

Persecution is evil; but protection is evil also. One must involve the other. The limit which separates them is arbitrary, and sure to be passed. Every privilege implies some exclusion, and the faith which is not protected is negatively persecuted. To accept protection is

to accept the right of persecution, and however meek and modest your disposition, persecute you must and will. 'Every protected religion will persecute, and persecute for an iota of theology or an atom of metaphysics.'

But let us suppose a mere protection, and this will be worse. The principle will exude more venom. Persecution quickens the conscience by opposition, protection stifles it. The purity of conviction is corrupted by interested motives. It adds no strength to the faith of the strong, and the feebleness of the weak is increased.

The principle, however, is the same in both. State interference implies a State religion. If the State has a religion, it must have a conscience, and if so, the conscience of the individual cannot maintain its ground. Conscience is supreme in man, and must be supreme in the State also. But what head can a man make against a State possessing a national conscience? You cannot oppose sovereignty to sovereignty, omnipotence to omnipotence. If the State have a conscience, the individual can have none; and since conscience is the seat of religion, if the State be religious the individual is not so. All other rights and liberties admit of abridgment and division. But conscience would cease to be conscience, if it should sacrifice an atom of itself. It has no parts, it is one and indivisible. The State conscience must be everything or nothing. Hence, if the State has a religion, the individual can have none; and if the individual has a religion, the State can have none.

The State is either a being or a fact. If it is a being it is everything; there can be no other conscience, and no other religion. But it is simply a fact, a voluntary in-

stitution, the result of a national want, in which each part reserves its own conscience whole and entire.

Religion, to be religion, must remain individual. The State denies individuality, and therefore denies religion itself. The Church, it is true, is a society also; but it is founded on individuality, and the individuals are religious, not the society. The object of the State is relative, and that of religion absolute truth; and this contrast fixes them in separate spheres, impenetrable to each other. Theocracy, indeed, was allied to absolute truth; but the State is only the temporary awning spread over the heads of all those individuals whose vocation is to seek after truth. If there be any such thing as social truth, it can only be practical, the truth respecting the means of protecting individuality, and the State can never rise to a higher point.

If the State is to have a religion, the smallest religious liberty will be an anti-social heresy. It will be implied that religion is a collective affair, which is false; that spiritual interests are on the same footing with political, which is false; that religion and worship form a part of civil obligation, which is false; and hence will ensue incredible ravages on the human conscience. This idea has weighed down consciences, attached and rooted them to the earth, has made religion spring from earth and not from heaven.

‘Can we believe that it is the truth which the State protects? Is it acquainted with her? Does it feel her power? Does it love her? With respect to you the truth is such or such a belief on which your mind is, or believes itself to be, irrevocably stayed. But the State will

protect neither truth in general, nor yours in particular ; but its own, or what in its wisdom it sees good to protect. This may be your religion, or that which you may be most opposed, and you may be desiring protection for error and falsehood. Or if it be yours, others, whose conviction is different, will have as much reason to utter the same complaint, and to make the same demand.'

The State can assume a bodily form only in the person of its rulers. Now these are but men ; and when men take upon them to regulate the affairs of religion, and as rulers to profess a religion, guilt always attaches to them of the nature of sacrilege. So when religion joins itself with the State, men are the actors, and for the crime they commit there is no other name but adultery. The Church is the adulterous spouse, and the State is the seducer. The alliance with the State is a breach of her marriage vow. If the Church acknowledge in the slightest degree the right of State interference with religious matters, she is justly chargeable with outrage and treason against her rightful Lord. This is not peculiar to the Christian religion. Every religion which has any respect for itself ought to keep the State at a distance, and to dread, as an act of unfaithfulness, the slightest control or incorporation.

But does not the State represent the man ? Yes, with one exception, and that exception is the conscience, which is strictly individual and must remain so. The man believes himself capable of discerning truth, but can the State discern it ? If so, it must be by permanent inspiration ; and then what is proved of one State will be denied of all others, for each State has its own doctrine.

The alliance is a heresy against the truth of the Gospel.



The characteristic of our faith is religious individuality. A general religion is no religion. The end of the new economy was not so much to create a people as to form individual believers. And since Christianity is the perfect law of liberty, the element of identity, which is that of the Civil Power, must disappear for ever from the domain of religion, and all contact between the Church and the State be thenceforth impossible.

The State, again, is not a larger family. For family religion will be stifled, if restrained by a superior power in the State. The parent can have a religion, and the State cannot; the child will attain its majority, but in a State Church we are always minors. If antiquity be urged, and universal consent, in accepting the Gospel which has proved the whole human race to be in error, we have pledged ourselves to its declarations. Having ventured the greater, we may venture the less, and, like it, may openly confront antiquity.

Finally, we must either accept all the liberty of the Christian form, or all the bondage of the Jewish. If we choose the latter, every one of its prescriptions must be maintained. The partisans of a mutilated system, a demi-theocracy, have no principle. If the theocracy cannot be wholly realized, it ought to be wholly abandoned. To dream of the absorption of the Church in the State, or the State in the Church, is to return to Judaism or to heathen idolatry.

Such, in brief, is Professor Vinet's argument against national religion. The rights of conscience are made an insurmountable barrier, which forbids all contact between the State and the Church. No name, perhaps, ranks higher on that side; and yet never have paradoxes been advanced

in more direct contradiction to the principles of social order, and the plain lessons of the word of God.

What is the doctrine here opposed? Every man is bound to search for Divine truth; and every sincere inquirer has the promise that his search shall not be made in vain: 'He shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.' Having this spirit of faith, he is bound to profess his convictions, for 'with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' He ought not only to believe the Gospel, but to act in all things on the faith that it is certainly true. So far we are or ought to be on common ground. But what is the duty of all men is the duty of rulers also, and in their official no less than their private conduct. Their new relation frees them from no part of the universal command, to do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, and to the glory of God. Their duty is only redoubled and confirmed by their high office. The larger the gifts of God, the louder is the call to unreserved obedience. All right obedience requires a knowledge and open confession of saving truth. Their office, also, is to be ministers of God for the good of the people, and the only real good of the creature is what brings him nearer to the Creator. There is thus a special obligation on rulers from the great end for which they are ordained. If the believer may not promote the spread of sound doctrine, and discourage by his influence religious error, or make offerings to God's service, then and then only can it be unlawful for princes and kings. These ministers of God are public traitors, when they refuse to own and obey the messages of their Sovereign. These ministers for good are bound, in all their policy, to promote the true good, the spiritual welfare of their people.

Again, the Ruler is in a peculiar sense the image of God. Conscience, the royal faculty, is not excluded from their province, but they are set apart to secure its noblest development: 'It is abomination to kings to commit wickedness, for the throne is established by righteousness.' Hence the force and beauty of the well-known saying, 'If honour were banished from all the world, it should find a refuge in the bosom of princes.' Whenever the State is practically adjudged to be 'man without his conscience,' the salt has lost its savour, and the gold is debased into miry clay. Such kingdoms cannot stand, but must soon be broken like a potter's vessel.

But what is the practical duty of rulers which results from this view of their office? Not, assuredly, to publish a verbal creed and impose it on their subjects at the point of the sword. First, they should take the word of God for the basis of their legislation, the sure and firm ground on which it is to rest. Next, they must execute the laws thus ordained in the fear of God, and with a constant appeal to His authority, who is the Supreme King of nations. Thirdly, they must use their public influence for the furtherance of true religion and piety, both among their own subjects, and to the ends of the earth. Fourthly, they must honour God with public worship, and provide outward helps to such worship throughout the land. Fifthly, while they are bound to reflect God's forbearance, they are bound to repress all blasphemous ribaldry, and gross and open dishonour to the name of God. Sixthly, they ought to honour the visible Church, as Christ's own appointed ordinance for spreading Divine truth through the earth. Lastly, in all their treaties and covenants they

ought to profess openly their subjection to their Heavenly Master, who is the Lord of lords and the King of kings.

The duty of national religion is thus a certain corollary from the universal obligation of all men to love and fear God, acknowledge His truth, and live to His glory. The law of holiness, of which it is a part, is universal in its demands. To tear off one branch strikes at the life of the whole, and rejects the authority of the Divine Lawgiver; but, wherever the duty is owned and fulfilled, a Christian State becomes a bright anticipation of the kingdom of righteousness hereafter to be revealed.

How, then, can conscience be pleaded against a duty so deeply rooted in the laws of Christian morality, confirmed by the voice even of the wisest heathens, the consent of the Church in all former ages, and by countless precepts and examples in the Word of God? It is not easy, in few words, to answer objections which conceal some gross and grievous fallacy almost in every sentence. Yet there are a few main pillars, on which the whole reasoning rests; and when these are overthrown, the edifice raised upon them crumbles into ruin.

I. The first maxim is the absolute duty of professing religious convictions—that is, every opinion on religious subjects really entertained. It cannot, then, be a duty of the State to prohibit, or even to discountenance, such a profession.

This first maxim is utterly untrue. A false belief, in the eye of Scripture, is either a sin itself, or the fruit of sin, and the public profession of it must be sinful also. If the tree be corrupt, the fruit will be corrupt. When the belief is sinful, so will be the profession. The rejec-



tion of God's truth is the sin which, above all others, ruins the soul. How, then, can the bold avowal of it be an imperative duty? In some cases, doubtless, a confession of false opinions may be the less of two evils, for hypocrisy aggravates every other sin. But the less of two sins is not a duty, much less a duty so sacred that the bonds of society must be loosened and destroyed in order to secure its performance. The obligation of a religious profession is always relative, not absolute. We are bound, first, to receive the truth, so far as it is accessible to us, and then to profess the truth we have received. With error and falsehood the case is widely different. It is sin, or a sin-bred infirmity, to believe it, and a further sin to spread and multiply the falsehood. To deny this, contradicts God's word, and subverts the foundation of Christian morality.

Error, because it is unreal, can never have really the evidence of truth. It must either be held doubtfully, as men see fancied objects in the dark, or else with a confidence due only to pride and self-will. The propagation of opinions on the gravest matters, while quite uncertain of their truth, is the sin of the quack, who sells medicines blindly, not knowing whether they will poison or cure. The propagation of such opinions, when we are positive without evidence, is to infect others with poison through their own self-will. To style this a Christian duty is the very sin of calling evil good and good evil, which the word of God so sternly condemns.

But because this doctrine is most false, may we infer that every wrong opinion in religion is to be crushed by the sword? The fear of this evil has hurried many



friends of liberty into an opposite extreme. If rulers punish and proscribe every one whose actions, tried by a perfect standard, are mingled with sin, they must begin with themselves. There are many sins which rulers cannot know to be sins, and therefore cannot lawfully punish. There are many, known to be sins, which cannot be punished here without the risk, or perhaps the certainty, of greater evil. A sin only becomes a crime when the general conscience discerns its evil nature, and by public law pronounces it a social mischief and wrong.

On the other hand, it is not always a duty to profess openly even true opinions, and to spread them among others. There are degrees in the assurance of truth, and gradations in the importance of the truths themselves. In a world like ours, convictions ripen slowly into noonday brightness. One degree of evidence may warrant our adoption of certain views, and a higher may be needed to justify their active propagation. The strength of a warrior must be greater than that of a little child. To make the open, active profession of religious opinions a clear duty, they must not only be true convictions, and convictions of truth, but have passed their first and infant stage, and have ripened more or less perfectly into a firm and well-assured faith.

The danger, then, of a collision of duties, when once national religion is allowed, is visionary and baseless. Sins on either side may be mistaken for duties, but collision can result from this cause alone. The obligations of rulers and of private conscience overlap and interfere, only when the real boundary is transgressed on one side or the other. If we make it the duty of the State to crush out every opinion, supposed to be false, by brute

force; or that of sinful men to propagate every falsehood, however mischievous, which they actually believe, from premises so monstrous absurd contradiction must ensue. But within the limits now defined social liberty has a wide field, unclaimed by public or private conscience on either side. And even should actual conflicts arise, it would be senseless to extinguish either of them on this account. As well might we require our own country or the United States, because of a few leagues of disputed boundary on the shores of the Pacific, to resign their whole territory to the rival power. Truth is always truth, and it is the duty both of rulers and their subjects to receive it first, and then to help in its diffusion. Falsehood is always falsehood, and either in rulers or their subjects its active propagation can never be a duty, but is always a sin.

II. The individuality of conscience is made the second basis of the objection. We cannot oppose omnipotence to omnipotence. Conscience would cease to be conscience if it should sacrifice one iota of itself. It has no parts, it is one and indivisible. Its rights admit of no abridgment or division. It must be everything or nothing; and hence, if the State has a conscience, the individual can have none.

Now what can these statements mean? Ought wrong never to be punished, while any one thinks it to be right, and truth never promoted, while any one thinks it to be falsehood? Must every one be suffered to do whatever his conscience requires, or, in Scripture phrase, whatever is right in his own eyes, without any restraint from other individuals, or from rulers and magistrates? This is the only meaning the words will bear, if they are to

throw light on the actual question. Yet what is this but anarchy run mad? The maxim, fully adopted and logically carried out, would restore the worst anarchy of the times of the Judges, and social order be extinguished in a saturnalian license of self-will and crime.

Conscience, it is said, admits no abridgment, the touch of a foreign authority is fatal to its being. But this is clearly untrue. Our conviction of what is right to be done may be modified or even reversed by the opposite conviction of another. Even our persuasion of the truth or falsehood of doctrines may be seriously affected by the opposing judgment of men whom we account wiser and better than ourselves. It may often be a duty to distrust our own opinion, and to follow directions which are the fruit of deeper wisdom and longer experience than our own. And even where there may be a real collision between the convictions of the Ruler and those of the private person, this does not destroy conscience on either side. Saul of Tarsus thought himself bound to persecute, and the saints thought it their duty to suffer in patience. There was a kind of collision between the chains and the captives, but conscience on both sides was in vigorous exercise. Such a conflict is painful and unnatural. It proves that one party is in serious error, but can never prove that conscience has ceased to exist.

The maxim, then, must receive some limitation. The absolute inviolability of conscience would involve, it is owned, the annihilation of society. Hence the State does well to punish crime severely, when it erects itself into doctrine, and to deal blows against anti-social actions, though prompted by conscience. It is to be inviolable

only 'in fundamental and strictly personal subjects, and with reference to the invisible, the infinite, and the immortal.'

This limitation is very needful, but is fatal to the whole argument. If conscience be sacred in every iota of its demands, the State must not deal severe blows against it under any pretence whatever. Anti-social doctrines must flourish as they please. Anarchy becomes lawful, and society must perish. But if the exception be allowed, the maxim is proved to be a falsehood. Conscience, then, is not indivisible. One class of its demands must be abandoned as unjust and ruinous. The question of limitation is no longer one of abstract right, but of degree. The duty of men to profess and propagate falsehoods, because they believe them, can never be so plain as that of rulers to repress doctrines highly pernicious to society, when their true tendency is known. The duty of rulers to propagate the more doubtful parts of their own creed can never be so plain, as that of their subjects to prove all things, and hold fast only that which is good. The absolute inviolability of conscience on either side is a glittering delusion. It confounds the faculty itself with the results of its imperfect use, or even its gross abuse. The Ruler or the private Christian may fall into error, and each may thus trespass on the other's province. Citizens may have to protest against a sinful oppression of the truth, or rulers to resist and discountenance the zealous dissemination of anti-social and poisonous error.

But is the distinction accurately drawn? What subjects are fundamental and strictly personal? If they are fundamental to the peace of society, there is the more



need for the State to interfere. But surely those which are the foundation of religious faith are also fundamental to social happiness and peace. No subject, again, is exclusively personal, when it affects the welfare of our neighbours. Take the question now before us. It is one of conscience, but it affects society in the most vital manner. If we say that rulers ought to discourage religious error, when they ought to abstain from these subjects entirely, do we not pave the way for the worst persecution? If we say that they have no province in religion, and yet this is really one of their first and chief duties, do we not degrade their office, and defame their most righteous actions, and thus undermine the foundations of the State? No truth or error, when published to others, can be purely personal. It is the subject of laws of social duty, the moment it exercises a social influence.

Is the other test, then, more exact? Is conscience inviolable, when it deals with 'the invisible, the infinite, and the immortal?' But when has crime, turned into doctrine, failed to satisfy this test? The maxim that virtue and vice are indifferent is anti-social and destructive, but it relates to the invisible and the immortal. The principles of Hobbes, Spinoza, and Epicurus, might claim innocence on this point, sooner than scruples about a surplice, a posture at the sacrament, or the right number of orders and offices in the Christian Church. Thus the Atheist, the Infidel, and open blasphemers, might be free to poison society without restraint; while Christians who differ only about herbs and meats would be left free to persecute each other even to death.

Here, indeed, is the main fault of Professor Vinet's



theory. It evades the practical difficulty, and puts us off with high-sounding, empty phrases alone. The State cannot enforce all that rulers fancy to be right and true on all subjects, or liberty and private conscience will expire. It cannot proclaim a free license to immorality and blasphemy, whenever conscience is pleaded; or society will perish, and liberty and conscience be buried in its ruins. We need a limit of practical wisdom, based on the Word of God, and we are offered only a metaphysical abstraction. We have to learn what truths are binding on us to publish at whatever cost; what convictions may be forborne for peace, either because they are unripe, or refer to secondary truth; and what falsehoods are so hurtful that the State may lawfully use all its power to restrain them. Instead of a real answer, we hear vague sounds about the infinite, the invisible, the immortal. But this high problem, on which the welfare of States and of souls depends, can never be solved in such a way. These vain abstractions must be left far behind, before we can trace out, calmly and wisely, the manifold relations of religious truth and the conscience of believers to the welfare of society, and to the laws of eternal duty which God has revealed.

III. A third objection is the tendency of all national religion to engender persecution. 'Every protected religion will persecute for an iota of theology, or an atom of metaphysics. Experience is here absolute. If such excesses have ceased, it is owing merely to the decay of convictions and decline of religion. Error is always consequent. Let us stop half way, it is of no importance; the conclusion is contained in the premises, and is im-

putable to him who has laid them down. You may abhor persecution, but the distinction is idle. You condemn yourself to submit to it, and what is worse, to make use of it.'

Truth is always consequent, falsehood never. This very argument is a proof. It has been said just before, that the progress of the public mind ensures the separation of Church and State, that opinion never retrogrades, and the change once made will be irrevocable and final. Yet here the practical neutrality of statesmen is ascribed to the decay of convictions and decline of religion. But if, in this irrevocable progress of thought, which never recedes, convictions have decayed, and religion droops and withers, the end of such a course must be utter and hopeless irreligion. The separation so earnestly desired will thus be only a first instalment of change, to appease the ravenous, wolf-like appetite of an insatiable infidelity. So then, because we have fallen on an age of decaying faith, when religious indifference abounds, we are to erect national indifference to truth, the public image and reflection of private unbelief, into an absolute law of duty, and then to fall down and worship this golden idol which our own hands have made.

But when indifference is set up for the law of States, we cannot stop there. 'The conclusion is contained in the premises.' Rulers and kings, in their laws, treaties, execution of justice, in their varied plans and efforts for the welfare of the people, are to exclude all reference to the word of God, the faith of Christ, 'the invisible, the infinite, and the immortal.' Can their subjects fail to copy the example? Can such a pattern be daily before their eyes, and not tend to change them into its own

likeness? When they are legislated for, as if they were mere brutes, whose portion is in this life alone, will it be strange if they forget or deny their own immortality? If God may be shut out from the State, and still its best welfare secured, why may not each citizen, with so fair a precedent, promise himself a little Paradise of contented irreligion? If an age of decaying convictions and declining faith makes the separation certain and inevitable, then a little more progress, a little more logical consistency, and the issue will be complete. From every citizen a cry will then ascend to heaven, the natural echo to the conduct of their rulers: 'We will not have this Man to reign over us.' When such is the plain result of the principle, logically developed, is it not safer for the Christian to struggle bravely against the current, however mighty, than to boast foolishly of its strength, and float passively on its downward stream?

Why should national religion involve the necessity of persecution? The charge is true, if everything but a total indifference to truth and error deserves the odious name. But then the best of all governments, that of God himself, must be the most persecuting; and persecution must increase, as we draw nearer to the standard of perfect and absolute goodness.

To avoid this paradox, we must adopt a truer definition. To persecute is to compel men to some outward service or profession by punishment, and an appeal to self-interest alone; in contrast to an appeal to the will, conscience, and heart, by the evidence of truth, and by the just exercise of lawful authority.

What, then, does it mean, to say that national religion

involves the necessity of persecution? It means this. Let rulers hold themselves bound to promote true religion by the best and most effectual means, and they will inevitably use the most ineffectual and the worst. Teach them that they are bound to promote and foster true piety, and they will infallibly use their whole influence to increase hypocrisy and deceit. Tell them that the Word of God should be their standard, and you lay them under an irresistible temptation to transgress some of its plainest commands. Remind them that their office is to be images on earth of the Divine justice, mercy, and forbearance; and you thereby compel them to perpetrate the worst injustice, and the most grievous oppression. Persuade them that they are bound to serve God, to honour Christ, to profess His faith, to seek the spiritual welfare of their people, to honour His word, His sanctuaries, and His ministers; and the certain result will be to make them doubly effective instruments in the service of the devil. Such is the true nature of this confident assertion, which too many Christians have been blind and thoughtless enough to believe.

Pride and unbelief are the true source of all those evils, which are calumniously laid to the charge of national religion. Both rulers and their subjects have too often loved darkness rather than light. Corrupt practice has bred unbelief, and unbelief has made the corruption inveterate. Their pride has revolted against the humbling message of the Gospel. They have thus adopted a false gospel instead of the true, and superstitious follies instead of pure and holy worship. The same pride has made them positive in their ignorance, and most obstinate when



deepest in error. A thousand heresies and superstitions have thus arisen among the people, and rulers have been seduced into countless acts of violence and oppression. The name of conscience has been profaned on both sides, while fatal errors have been zealously diffused in the name of liberty, or cruelty been styled the just exercise of authority in the cause of religion.

What, then, is the nature of the theory now examined? It transfers the blame of all these evils from the pride and unbelief out of which they really flow, to bring a calumnious charge against a sacred and solemn truth. Individuals, first of all, are absolved from all blame. The zealous propagation of falsehood, a sin hurtful to society, and hateful before God, is considered as a virtue, an absolute right, to which the interests of society and the sceptre of princes must give way. Even with rulers, the blame is not cast on their ignorance, which neglects God's truth, or their pride, which opposes and perverts it. The whole guilt is made to rest on this one doctrine, that it is their official duty to honour publicly the truth of Christ, and the Church which is its witness. Convictions of duty, awakened by the commands and examples of God's word, are loaded with the guilt of ages of persecution; while the real criminals, the unbelief and pride both of princes and people, are freed from all blame. Christ is crucified, and Barabbas is set free.

IV. The Mischiefs of Protection form another part of the same argument. This more subtle enemy stifles and destroys the conscience. Self-interest can never be excluded from some share in the formation of our convictions. But this adds to the evil, and sanctions the abuse



which ought to be resisted. We might as well make a list of all the vices and passions, and incorporate them with the laws of civil society. The sharpest persecution is to be preferred to the most indirect protection.

How strange that such maxims can be maintained for one moment by thoughtful and pious men! They apply to morality no less than religion, and how fearful is the conclusion to which they must lead! Their voice to rulers is of this kind: 'Beware of protecting the truth, you will stifle its delicate life. Let no rewards encourage the virtuous, you will pollute the pure fountains of disinterested love. Inflict no penalties on vice. This would teach men to abstain from actions only through fear, which they should renounce from hatred of evil. Let all wickedness have free course. Virtue will only gather strength from opposition, and the heroism of martyrs will shine out with fuller beauty. Rewards and punishments are a moral nuisance, and exude more venom than anarchy itself, or open persecution of the truth. They add no strength to the strong, for saints and apostles delight to brave danger in the cause of righteousness. And they increase the feebleness of the weak; for instead of pursuing virtue for its own sake, they will think only of the patronage of earthly rulers, or the rewards of the life to come. The example of David and Hezekiah, when followed by Christian kings, is more venomous than the worst persecution, and Maximin and Galerius would be safer models of Imperial excellence and virtue.'

Again, the rights of conscience, though part of the Christian religion, are said to require a further guarantee from the institutions of society. 'Divine wisdom never

abandons duty to itself, but always sustains it by outward supports. We must not seek to be wiser than God.'

This remark is true, but strangely opposed to the argument of which it is a part. Why should the principle, owned in one case, be abjured in every other? If one small part of truth and duty needs outward support, why is the principle, when applied to all the rest, fatal and venomous? Are falsehoods, however pernicious, to be held sacred, when once they have lodged in a blinded conscience, and even to have outward supports and guarantees for their diffusion; and are the like supports abominable, when used in behalf of the great truths of natural and revealed religion? Must the State patronize the doctrine, that the publication of falsehoods is often a sacred duty, that to reward good actions and punish the bad is a mischievous nuisance, and that it is a sin to restrain any one from any thing he believes to be right? And must it withhold all countenance from the truths that there is a God, a redemption, an immortal life, and judgment to come? This is indeed to put darkness for light, and light for darkness.

A State leavened by such principles must become a hotbed of anarchy and atheism, a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. It will guarantee the omnipotence of conscience, and refuse to own the Almighty power of God. The truths of His word will be set aside, and replaced by a new creed; the right of conscience to sanctify every error, and give impunity to every crime, when once it has been dignified by some show of abstract principle, that may link it with 'the invisible, the infinite, the immortal.'

Such maxims, again, must defeat their own aim, and issue in direct persecution. The State, while owning the truth of God's Word, has to provide guarantees for the rights of conscience, as the theory defines them. They must be made fundamental laws, and consent to them, in practice or theory, will become the condition of civil privilege. Those who refuse their authority will be placed under the ban of public opinion, and soon or late to some more rigid test. Blasphemers of Christ may have free access to all the seats of power; but those who deny that conscience is omnipotent, and all creeds socially indifferent, will be excluded and proscribed. The theory which rejects truth, to avoid the risk of persecution, will thus end infallibly by persecuting itself. The servants of the God of truth will be shut out from the honours of the State, that they may be given freely to those who worship this dumb idol of religious neutrality.

Wherever protection has been injurious, it is not national religion which has been the cause, but rather some deep infection of the opposite theory of national indifference. For what has been the nature of that protection, to which so many mischiefs are ascribed? It is one which has not cared to encourage Christian life and faith as a whole, but only some formal profession, creed, or declaration, and has cared for nothing more when the form was satisfied. The State, it is said, has not espoused true religion, but only its shadow. In times of decaying conviction the charge is true. The faith which gave birth to religious constitutions begins to forsake them, and only barren formulas are left behind. The opposite ideals are these, that rulers should encourage living piety

with all their might, or that they should abstain wholly from meddling with religion. In the case before us, they have protected a mere shadow, and even this not heartily. To which standard, then, have they made the nearer approach, that of national religion or national indifference? Clearly to the latter. Such a protection is only the corpse of national Christianity, not the living reality. The evil fruits of a deadened conscience and a palsied faith are not due to the system practically renounced, while only its form is retained, but to that of which the inner spirit has been wholly adopted, though it has not yet clothed itself with its own appropriate form. The moral blight prevails, because national unbelief has eaten out the core of Christianity, and nothing is left but formularies and empty names.

The whole argument fights against a universal law of the Divine government. 'God never abandons duty to itself, He always provides it with some outward support.' It is so in the whole economy of the present life, and in the rewards and punishments of the life to come. So ought it to be also in the State. Evils may arise from the ignorance of rulers, or the hypocrisy of the people, but the principle cannot be set aside without anarchy and ruin. The restraints of public law must then wholly cease, and men be abandoned to their own passions.

V. The Individual Character of Christianity is made another link in the argument. The State, it is said, which pretends to be religious, denies individuality, and thus denies religion. The end of the Gospel was not so much to create a people as to form individual believers. The

element of identity, which belongs to the civil power, has disappeared for ever from the domain of religion.

The Christian religion is individual and personal. But it is also social and Divine. Its aim is not the separation of man from his brother in pride and self-will, but reunion in the bonds of faith and love? Its true nature is reversed, when we define it by the exclusion of identity and union. Its real law is sevenfold unity, not sevenfold isolation. Each one is to believe for himself, but to believe one common faith, which links him powerfully to his fellow-Christians in one common love. The individual element is subordinate to the social, and the social to the Divine. The rights of individual conscience, exaggerated and falsely explained, are fatal to things still more essential, the claims of society, and the supreme authority of the truth of God.

Now if principles of anarchy, that is, of pure individualism, are once enthroned in the Church, we cannot hinder their triumph in the State also. If individuality be the essence of the Christian religion, and no elements of identity are possible, then a nation of Christians must be a nation of savages. No bond could unite them except by their partial apostasy from their own faith. Once let them carry their religion into every thought and act, and by the maxim now examined no element of identity would remain. Each must remain aloof, an ascetic on his pillar, a Christian of the desert, and his redemption be complete only when he has renounced the last tie that binds him to his fellow-men. But it is needless to trace a paradox further, which not even its author could seriously have



received in its full extent. Individuality is not the essence of the Gospel. It is one element, subordinate to others of an opposite kind, the uniting power of common faith and brotherly love, and the common subjection of the whole Church to the authority of their Lord and Master in heaven. The object of our Lord was 'to take out of the Gentiles a people for His name.' Christians are 'a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.' The Saviour died, that He might 'purify unto Himself a peculiar people.' Being many, they are 'one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.' Almost in every description of the Church the individual element is made subordinate to that social union, by which all believers are one body in Christ.

Again, it is no less plain that the State has individual elements in its constitution. Human laws re-echo the words of the Apostle: 'Every man shall bear his own burden.' Every sentence on crime, every public reward and honour, bears witness in the State to personal responsibility. To say that the spheres of the Church and the State are wholly separate, because the first is exclusively individual, the second exclusively social, is thus a double paradox of the wildest and most extravagant kind. It contradicts the plainest features of political society, and involves a grievous heresy against the calling of the Church of God.

The State and the Church, it is said further, have nothing in common, because one has relative, the other absolute truth for its object. The theocracy indeed was allied to absolute truth, but the State is now quite different, a temporary awning over the heads of those whose

vocation is to seek after truth. A Divine theocracy has no principle on which to rest. The theocracy itself is not a system, it has never been anything but a fact. It can never exist except where laws are oracles. It is impossible to allow an institution, which shall only half represent the conscience of man. If there be any social truth, it is only about the means of protecting the rights of individuality. If the theocracy cannot be wholly realized, it should be wholly abandoned.

In this argument relative truth seems to mean mere opinions, which may or may not be true, but are supposed true by those who hold them. Here, then, is a fresh contradiction. The Church, affirmed just before to be purely individual, is now said to be allied to absolute, and the State, to which the element of identity belongs, to relative truth. But on the former hypothesis, the exact reverse must be true. Absolute truth is unity, one common faith. Relative truth is separating and individual, being nothing else than private opinion. Again, if the State has no connexion with absolute truth, then citizens and rulers have no duties absolutely binding on them, but only what each of them supposes to be duty. This is only pure anarchy, disguised under bad metaphysics. The whole contrast is most baseless and unsound. The State is and must be allied to absolute truth; for the absolute truth is God himself, and in spite of all these theories He reigns, and must ever reign, the King of nations, the Supreme Governor of the whole earth.

The State is no temporary awning spread over the heads of mere seekers after truth. Christians are not merely seeking for truth, they must in part have attained it, or

they would not be Christians. The Christian Ruler too must have attained it, and use what he has attained to the glory of God. By Him kings reign and princes decree justice, who is the Absolute Truth and the Eternal Wisdom.

The subject of the theocracy, from its importance, requires separate notice. The rest of the argument against national religion from the claims of conscience, by one of its ablest opponents, has now been sifted, and shown to be worthless. The paradoxes that compose it are dangerous to the foundations of society, and wholly opposed to plain statements of the Word of God. The propagation of religious falsehoods is never a duty, but always a sin. The State, in discountenancing the sin firmly and wisely, is the friend of conscience, not its enemy ; for whatever confounds sins with duties deadens and destroys the conscience, and what maintains and deepens the contrast is its friend.

Conscience is not indivisible. Some of its dictates may be so wise and weighty that they must be fulfilled at whatever cost ; others may be so perverse, that the ruler must restrain them, or be a traitor both to God and man. National Christianity does not imply persecution, else obedience to the God of love would mean cruelty and oppression. It does imply protection, and protection is the universal law of Divine government. The Gospel, though individual, is eminently social. The State, though social, is also individual in every action of its laws. The spheres, instead of being impenetrable, blend with each other. The main end of the Gospel is to unite the selfish into one family of love ; and the highest excellence of the State is

to develop all the individual gifts of all its members. The claims of conscience cannot long be revered, where the State is neutral to all religious truth. Its sphere is contracted, its motives are destroyed, the best safeguards of its development removed, and the very basis on which it rests is done away. Whenever it clashes with mere worldly prudence, it will be maligned as a fanatic dream or sentimental folly. By national religion its privileges are restored, its foundation confirmed, its province enlarged, and its true glory maintained. It has cautions supplied, to awaken its vigilance, and motives to prompt its activity, that it may minister alike to the happiness of the Christian, the welfare of the State, and the glory of the Most High.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

THE duty of National Religion has now been proved from the universal laws of Christian morality, from the nature of the objects for which civil rulers are appointed, from the history of the origin of States, the nature of the social compact, and the union in our Lord of the three offices, which reflect three glorious attributes of God, the Prophet, the Priest, and the King. The words of our Lord before Pilate, and His answer about the tribute-money, instead of opposing this truth, only confirm it. The double objection drawn from the actual state of the primitive Church, and from the rights of private conscience, is a worthless shadow. No one can deduce a perpetual law from the absence of Christian establishments in the days of the Apostles, without making atheism or heathen idolatry, in the case of emperors and kings, of perpetual obligation. Let us now inquire, whether the New Testament, in spite of many contrary assertions, does not supply ample and various evidence in confirmation of the same truth.



## I. THE OPENING WORDS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

‘The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.’ This first sentence of St. Matthew’s Gospel plainly reminds us of those promises of Messiah which Abraham and David had received. But they teach also a further lesson. Abraham was the father of a holy household, and David the pattern of a king after God’s own heart. They are not only ancestors, but types, of One higher and nobler, the Father of the everlasting age, the King of righteousness, and Prince of peace. In Him all the families of the earth were to be blessed. In Him also the throne of David’s kingdom was to be established for ever. The holy Family, and the righteous Nation, are thus two main stages in that upward pathway of Divine Providence, which issues in the full light and glory of the Gospel of Christ, and His heavenly kingdom.

Why, again, was David singled out for this especial honour, and called the man after God’s heart? Because the glory of God was ever dear to him in his royal office. No false shame held him back from open reverence to Him, whose mercy and favour had raised him to the throne. In the name of God he overthrew Goliath, and wrought a great deliverance for Israel. By the advice of God he went up to Hebron, and received the kingdom over Judah. When he was anointed over all Israel, he made an open covenant before the Lord. He consulted the oracle of God, unlike Saul, in every question of peace and war. His first act, after his early victories as king, was to restore the ark from its hiding-place, and bring it in triumph to Zion. His last public act was to present

costly gifts for the future building of the Temple, and to pledge his son to carry forward the work, while he celebrated the mercies of God before the assembled people. He was thus a type of One greater than himself, the righteous King, whose meat and drink was to do the will of His Father, and to glorify His name.

Once accept the negative theory of government, and this first title of our Lord in the gospels, the Son of David, loses nearly all its force and beauty. David will then be a beacon for kings to avoid, rather than a pattern for their imitation. But the Holy Spirit here teaches us, at the very opening of the New Testament, that the Family and the State, as represented by Abraham and by David, are holy things. They are two main steps in that ascending pathway, which leads onward to the full redemption by Christ, and are earnest of the heavenly family and kingdom, where our Lord will be a Father and a King for ever.

## II. THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN.

Why does our Lord, even from His birth, receive the title, King of the Jews? The answer is easy, if a king is one who exercises righteous judgment in the name and by the authority of God. What all other kings ought to do, and do imperfectly through their infirmity and sin, our Lord will do perfectly, first towards His people Israel, and then towards all the world, and therefore is styled the King of the Jews, and the King of nations. The office is the same, but it is to be fulfilled by Him in a far more perfect way.

But if a king is one whose proper business is only to secure temporal objects by worldly motives, excluding all

religious truth alike from his motives and his aim, then our Lord would be no king. The name would be a dishonour and a disgrace to the Son of God. For His great work, from Bethlehem to Calvary, was to reverse the main law of the kingly office, as thus defined, and to link more and more closely things social with things religious, things temporal with things spiritual, things human with things divine. No contrast can be more total and absolute than between the office of a king on this neutral theory, and the whole life-work of our blessed Lord. But the title so early given to Him, the King of the Jews, shows plainly that royalty includes religious elements in its very essence ; and that whoever would fulfil it aright must look to this Divine example, and view himself, in all his public actions, his laws, and his policy, as an appointed underworker in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

### III. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

This title meets us in the opening of the Baptist's message, and of our Lord's own ministry. What can it mean, if the only province of the ruler in religion is to have 'no province at all?' We might as well speak of the midnight of heaven to describe its glory, or the chaos of heaven to express its perfect order and beauty, or the blindness of heaven to denote the beatific vision, as employ this phrase, 'the kingdom of heaven,' on the modern theory of government, to describe the state in which every thought will be an act of worship, and will centre in the will of Christ, and the glory of God.

But when we accept the true view of the kingly office, the meaning is clear. Earthly rulers are ministers

of God for the good of the people. They have to manifest on earth, so far as they are able, God's attributes of power and righteousness. From Him their authority is derived, and to Him it should be consecrated, with a constant desire to advance His kingdom, and glorify His name. The law of personal duty applies to them eminently in this sacred trust. The moral state of their people may be so low, that their conscience can be very slowly aroused to nobler objects; and rulers themselves may be so wanting in true wisdom, as to be fit only for the lowest and meanest parts of their office. They will then sink into police detectives, spies, and executioners, or costly puppets, rather than kings and fathers of their people. But the standard of their duty remains unchanged. And this is, by the punishment of all things evil, and the reward, culture, and encouragement of all things pure and good, to raise their people higher and higher, not only in outward prosperity, but in moral excellence, spiritual dignity, and heavenly wisdom.

Earthly kings have never attained this high standard. Too often they have practised, or encouraged in others, the worst superstition and profaneness. Pride and respect of persons have set aside justice, equity, and the fear of God. Crime has been shielded by numbers, or sanctified by deceitful names, or hypocrisy has usurped the rewards of genuine virtue. The rights of property have been placed higher than the claims of God, and poverty treated as a greater social fault than open profaneness. Thus Naboths have been stoned, and false prophets seated with honour at the royal table.

But the standard which earthly rulers have too often

reversed, and never fully attained, will be completely realized in 'the kingdom of heaven.' For here the King, though the Son of man, will have an All-seeing eye to detect evil, an Almighty arm to punish the wicked and reward the righteous, and a heart of perfect love to seek the truest, highest, and fullest good, of all those who obey Him. Righteousness and judgment will be the habitation of His throne, mingled with ineffable grace and boundless wisdom. He will appear the second time, in glory and majesty, to reign for ever. But meanwhile all earthly kings are bound to fix their eyes on His bright example, that they may be changed more and more into His image, and reflect, in all their laws and policy, the purity and excellence of this heavenly King. Such a kingdom, however, though full of hope to a world which has long groaned under the sore oppression of evil, must be terrible to the open sinner; and hence its proclamation has that solemn preface, 'The axe is already laid to the root of the tree: every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.'

IV. THE TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD, when compared with the Sermon on the Mount, yields another strong confirmation of the same truth. The words of the Tempter (Matt. iv. 8-10) were no empty boast. The kingdoms of the earth, and their glory, were actually, to a great extent, surrendered to his power. And what, under his influence, was their standing law? Our Lord himself expounds it in a later passage (Matt. vi. 31-33). It was the reign of anxious care for the wants of the body alone, without any desire for the kingdom and righteousness of God. There was no trust in his providence, and no desire for his glory. This total divorce of their



worldly pursuits from all higher objects was a stamp of evil upon their foreheads, which proved that their power and glory were in the hands of the Tempter of men.

Can that be the standard of duty for Christian kings, which, if copied by their subjects, marks the whole nation as part of the kingdom of darkness? Can the same maxim, in rulers, be a law of Christ, and in their people the clear sign of Satanic power? Kingdoms are the prey of moral delusion, when their citizens make bodily comfort and plenty their chief aim. Must not the *glory* of them belong to the Tempter, when their rulers adopt this very maxim in their whole policy and course of legislation? That exclusive care for the things of this life, which, in the people, is convincing evidence of Satanic delusion, can never be, in kings and rulers themselves, the ideal of true and perfect wisdom.

Our Lord was manifested to destroy the works of the devil; and among the foremost of these is that worldly mind, which divorces the things of earth from the hope of heaven. He came to abolish secularism among the people, and could not intend to enthrone it in the policy of their rulers. He never meant, by a moral compensation, that subjects were to care more, but kings in their public conduct less, for the things unseen and eternal. The lesson His words teach us is clear and simple. Nations are under the power of Satan, when, from the throne to the cottage, outward affluence is their highest aim. Our Lord came to redeem them from his power, by teaching a higher lesson to the peasant in the field, to statesmen in the council, and to kings on their thrones; to seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, or the advance-

ment of His cause throughout the earth. Every theory which narrows this universal truth, only tends to perpetuate the dominion of God's adversary, and to hinder the full triumph of redeeming love.

#### V. THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING (Matt. v. 35).

The title commonly assigned in the east to the king of Persia, is here, in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, applied to God himself. Jerusalem is called His city, the earthly metropolis of His kingdom. To gain a just view of the kingly office, our eyes are thus turned, by our Lord's own voice, to the past and future history of Jerusalem. What lessons meet us there? First, the brief record of Melchizedec, a priest of the Most High, reigning in this royal city as a king of righteousness and peace. Next, the reign of David, a king after God's own heart, who recovers the city from heathen profanation, appeases God's anger for national sin by public offerings, fixes on the site of the temple, and prepares large tributes for the public worship of the God of Israel. We pass onward to the times of the Gospel, and the King of Zion comes to her, meek and lowly; and His first work, in claiming His royal character, is to cleanse the sanctuary of God from careless profaners. We look forward once more, and the word of prophecy enables us to decipher a glorious inscription on its portals,—‘The name of the city from that day shall be, THE LORD IS THERE.’ Whatever illusions may prevail in these our days, no dream of separation between royal power and religious truth and worship dares once to obtrude itself within the sacred precincts of ‘the City of the Great King.’

#### VI. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM (Matt. xii. 26–30).

‘If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself: how, then, shall his kingdom stand? But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.’

The kingdoms of God and of Satan, we are here taught, are directly opposed, and there is no neutral ground between them. Earthly kingdoms must either give their power and glory to Satan, or to the Son of God. The test of allegiance is taught elsewhere: ‘Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.’ ‘Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus;’ that is, in the character and with the spirit of a true disciple. ‘Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness.’ The rulers, who adopt these laws for the guide of their policy, publicly belong to Christ. Those who disown them, and rule by an opposite law of putting religious truth out of sight, must belong to the kingdom of darkness. There is here no middle standing. Every step of national departure from the open acknowledgment of the Word of God is a downward progress into the land of moral darkness.

The praise given in the same discourse to the repenting Ninevites teaches the same truth. For what was their act, which our Lord assures us will be solemnly approved in the judgment-day? It was their ready and zealous obedience to a religious service, directly enforced on them by the civil ruler. The king of Nineveh caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh, *by the decree of the king and his nobles*. On the theory of State neutrality, obedience to such a command, issuing from such a

source, would have been consent to a criminal usurpation, to be described by no gentler terms than religious adultery and sacrilege. The voluntary principle was reversed by a royal decree, which might even seem open to some charge of superstition, for why should the cattle also be clothed in sackcloth? Yet our Lord anticipates His own sentence at the judgment-day, and stamps this act of the Ninevites with His Divine approval. Acts of religious duty, right in themselves, have their obligation only redoubled and confirmed by the ordinance of the civil power. The religious province of earthly rulers is here established by the approving voice of the King of kings.

The lesson in the praise of the Queen of the South is the same. She is highly praised, because she left her own land to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And what was the nature of that wisdom, which our Lord praises her for seeking after with such diligence? We learn it from her own words: 'Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on His throne, to be king for the Lord thy God: because the Lord thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made He thee king over them, to do judgment and justice.' The wisdom, then, which she gained by her journey, and for which our Lord commends her search, consisted, on the one hand, in the union of kingly power with judicial equity; and on the other, in the public consecration of the throne, the king, and the whole nation, to the service of the living God. The reverse is equally true. When sensual pleasure and worldly expedience betrayed Solomon into the patronage of idolatry, to conciliate his wives, his wisdom departed from him, and the glory of his kingdom was obscured.

His sorrowful repentance became then a standing lesson, to kings and princes, of the vanity and vexation of spirit which an ungodly policy never fails to bring in its train.

VII. THE PROMISE TO THE TWELVE APOSTLES (Matt. xix. 28).

The regeneration here answers to the phrase in St. Peter's discourse, 'the restitution of all things.' The creation will then be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and a regenerated world rejoice under its Maker's eye. In that kingdom of Christ, the Apostles who once shared His temptations and sufferings will share in His glory. He will be the King who reigns in righteousness, and they will be near to Him in His kingdom, princes who rule in judgment (Isa. xxxii. 1).

The promise, thus explained in its natural meaning, is a powerful testimony to the true ideal of kingly power. It may become secular and worldly in the hands of sinful men, but in its own essential nature it is holy, apostolic, and heavenly. A noble pattern of kingly rule is here set before us by our Lord himself, the same which every Christian has to follow after in his own religious course. That pattern is the Apostles in their resurrection glory. Earthly kings should strive to approach nearer and nearer to this high standard, where royal authority is blended with zeal for Christ, open confession of His name, and the largest treasures of heavenly wisdom. They are bound, in the light of this promise, to cast aside every worldly theory, which would bury them in the dust, that they may become like morning-stars of hope to the people over whom they rule, until the day shall dawn, and the true Day-star arise and shine for ever.



VIII. THE PARTING COMMISSION OF THE APOSTLES  
(Matt. xxviii. 18-20).

These words of our Lord, at the close of the first Gospel, seal and confirm its other testimonies. Since He claims all power on earth, no less than in heaven, it is treason for rulers to set aside and disown His supreme dominion. They are His subjects, and He is their Lord. Are these subjects to be strictly neutral on the question whether their King has any lawful authority, or His law any fixed meaning? Is it their duty never to mention the name of their King, or to appeal to His authority, or to show Him any signs of public reverence? These are surely the marks of some rebellious province, which is casting off its allegiance, and not of true subjects. Yet if rulers are to be neutrals in religion, such must be, nay ought to be, their public conduct towards the Lord of heaven and earth, from whom their power is derived, and to whom an account of their stewardship must be given. This is not to be disciples, but rebels; not servants of Christ, but apostates from His covenant. He is with His people to the end of the world, and His eyes are with kings on their thrones (Job, xxxvi. 7). He charges them to follow His own example, and those of righteous kings, whom He commands to rule in the fear of God, to cherish the faithful of the land, and to punish open transgressors with the sword. The neutral king or statesman, who hides his Christian profession in the napkin of false shame or secret unbelief, can only expect the doom of the wicked and slothful servant; while he who confesses the Lord from whom his power is derived, and seeks earnestly to promote His kingdom, will have a gracious welcome at

the last, as a good and faithful servant, from the lips of the True and Eternal King.

IX. THE QUESTION OF THE APOSTLES (Acts, i. 6).

The history of the Church, from the day of Pentecost to the close of the Canon, has often been fancied to supply an argument against national establishments of religion. But the supposed argument is merely the assertion of an evident fact, that kings and emperors were then unbelievers; with the addition of a groundless inference, as if one main evil the Gospel was sent to cure and reverse were a lasting rule of Christian duty. But, in reality, these later parts of the New Testament, no less than the Gospels, yield many testimonies for an opposite view; that the right discharge of the duties of civil government requires, on the part of rulers, an open confession of religious truth, and public submission to the Divine authority of the Son of God.

The inquiry of the Apostles just before the Ascension is a first argument. Could they imagine that kingly power was of a purely secular nature, with which religion had nothing to do? Clearly their view was just the reverse, that the establishment of a kingdom wholly religious was one main step in God's counsel for the recovery of our fallen world.

It may be asserted, perhaps, that they were wholly in error, and their impression a feverish dream. This must imply that, after our Lord had explained to them for forty days 'the things pertaining to the kingdom of God,' He had left them ignorant of some of its simplest elements. This is indeed a strange and unnatural gloss on the simple narrative. It is perfectly clear that the Apostles, in the

hour of the Ascension, never suspected that the Gospel was to set aside those laws of royal duty with which the law and the prophets had made them familiar; but still regarded the just exercise of kingly power as one main instrument of God's Providence, designed to help on the triumphs of Christian holiness and the salvation of mankind.

#### X. THE PENTECOSTAL DISCOURSES (Acts, ii. 4).

St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declares to the Jews that David, being a prophet, knew the will of God, that He would raise up Christ to sit on His throne, and spoke before of His resurrection. These words led to the conversion of three thousand souls on that birthday of the Church of Christ. What lesson do they clearly imply as to the true character of royal power? Is this a secular, animal affair, to care only for the bodies, and neglect the souls of men? Do we not learn that the resurrection, the central doctrine of our faith, is really the enthronement of a king, to exercise royal dominion, and was proclaimed in this light to the first disciples? How could the Church be taught more plainly, from its very cradle, that the kingly office is a sacred ordinance of God, vitally connected, by laws of eternal duty, with the cause of Christ, the progress of the Gospel, and the salvation of souls?

St. Peter once more sets the claim of our Lord before the Jewish rulers and scribes and elders in these words: 'This is the stone which is set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.' The temple here spoken of is clearly the spiritual building, the Church of the redeemed in all ages, the house of the living God.

The civil rulers of the Jews are called builders of this temple, unfaithful builders who had despised the Chief Corner-stone, and were ready to be cast aside and degraded from their office for their unbelief. Still their office is clearly defined to be builders of this temple. If this was the duty and calling of the Jewish rulers, it must be the duty of Gentile rulers also. They, too, are builders, often unfaithful, incompetent, and perverse, yet builders still. Their appointed office is this; to help on the building of His glorious temple, composed of ransomed souls from all nations, until the top-stone shall be placed upon it with songs of praise. No sin on their part can alter or lower their sacred trust, though it may bring on them the doom of the unfaithful servant.

The song of the early Church at the close of the chapter teaches the same lesson. Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the rulers of the Jews, had fulfilled the prophecy of David, and been gathered together against the Christ of God. But on the neutral theory it will be hard to prove that Pilate had been guilty of any sin. He clearly wished to be troubled as little as possible with this religious question. He was willing to refer the whole case to the ecclesiastical power: 'Take ye him, and judge him after your law.' He shewed himself superior to all bigotry, free from an official preference of one creed above another, a perfect adept in the creed of religious equality, when he put the hasty question, 'What is truth?' and did not wait for an answer. A prisoner was declared guilty of blasphemy by the highest court of the Jewish Church. By the law of that Church the punishment of blasphemy was death. What could the governor do? Must he allow



the truth of the charge, and refuse the sanction, without which the sentence of the law could not be fulfilled? If so, he would have practised usurpation on the rights of the Church, and forbidden them to execute one of the laws of God. Was he to examine the truth of the charge? If so, as civil ruler, he would entertain the most vital of all religious questions, and perhaps dare to decide it against the unanimous voice of the Sanhedrim. If our Lord were not the Son of God, He was a blasphemer, and worthy of death. If innocent of blasphemy, then His claim was well founded; and Pilate was bound, like the leper or the blind man, to worship before Him, as Cæsar's Lord and his own. What was his actual course? He did everything to clear himself of innocent blood, except that one thing which the neutral theory of government denounces as a sin. As governor, he refused to decide what was the truth in a great question of religious faith. He would not examine matters of faith at all, but dismissed them with careless unconcern. He might have private suspicions of his own, but he would make no public confession of the Son of God. He would settle the matter by motives of present expediency, 'lest a tumult should be made.' He followed punctiliously the maxim of some modern statesmen, that religious questions should be settled only on political grounds. And now his condemnation is recorded by the spirit of prophecy, and by the whole Church of God. Like Lot's wife, He is made a beacon through all ages to governors and kings, to expose the mischiefs of the theory which expels faith from their councils, to replace it by lower motives of peace and conciliation. The question, 'What is truth?' when carelessly



uttered by statesmen as the warrant for religious neutrality, is thus a standard put into their hands by spirits of darkness, to prepare them for a fatal gathering 'against the Lord and against His Christ.'

#### XI. THE DEATH OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA.

The facts of the apostolic history are here in direct contradiction to the view that the spheres of civil rulers and church governors are entirely distinct and separate. Both Jewish and heathen rulers, it is true, were men faithless to their trust, and hindered that Gospel which they were bound to receive and obey. But whether they persecuted, like the high-priests, or looked on with cold, selfish indifference, like Pilate, this is laid to their charge as a grievous sin. On the other hand, the duties which they would not or could not exercise within the Church, through their unbelief, were partially fulfilled by the Apostles themselves. To maintain the rights of property, and regulate public funds, is one main branch of civil government. But all the possessions of land and money, in the early Church, were laid at the feet of the Apostles, who then made distribution, as every man had need. The capital punishment of crime has ever been the most decisive mark of civil supremacy. Yet the Spirit of God here directs St. Peter not only to excommunicate, but to pronounce, and virtually to execute, a sentence of death. Provision for the wants of the poor is another civil function, and this again was committed to the deacons of the Church. We are thus taught by facts, in the most impressive way, the close connexion between true faith and civil government. When the irreligion or unbelief of rulers unfitted them for the full discharge of their

office, its functions, in the case of believers, were partially transferred to others, and the teachers of the new faith became, to a great extent, substitutes for the Jewish and Roman governors in the exercise of various judicial powers. Already, before the death of Stephen, the separation of social duties from religious faith, occasioned by Jewish unbelief and heathen idolatry, was almost healed within the bosom of the Church. The distribution of the offerings of the faithful, nearly the whole of their possessions, and even denunciation of death against a grievous crime, were intrusted to those who had been set apart to 'prayer and the ministry of the word.'

## XII. THE DEATH OF HEROD AGRIPPA.

The judgment on Herod is thus described; after the flattery of the people: 'Immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. But the word of God grew and multiplied.' He had already been guilty of cruelty and persecution, both towards the keepers of the prison and the Church of Christ. But a direct sin in his official character, against God himself, brought on the judgment. The flattery was bestowed during an official audience, and seems to have been accepted only by silence. Yet this dishonour done to God brought down a sudden vengeance. Kings and princes, then, in their public state and official splendour, owe a debt of public reverence to the great Name of God. They copy Herod's sin when they are neutral and indifferent, and pass by the name of God in utter silence. The sin of Belshazzar under the Old Testament, and of Herod under the New, is the same, a moral offence unchangeable in all ages. They

gave not God the glory. When such is the policy of infidel rulers, the State itself must soon be a prey of corruption, and the handwriting of judgment be on its walls.

XIII. THE HISTORY OF GALLIO is still more instructive. He was a perfect specimen of religious neutrality, He would neither receive the charge of the Jews, nor listen to the defence of the Apostle, but drove them all away from the judgment-seat; and even when Sosthenes was beaten before the tribunal, 'Gallio cared for none of these things.' No comment is made, but the history, on the face of it, implies a strong condemnation.

This view has been lately questioned by some advocates of religious neutrality. The conduct of Gallio, it is said, was nearly free from blame. He was right when he said, 'I will be no judge of such matters,' and made a sensible distinction between causes that lay within and beyond his province as a judge, between those of criminal jurisprudence and of religious casuistry. In dismissing the latter, he acted with propriety. He was wrong only when he allowed the Greeks to employ personal violence with impunity, and to beat the chief ruler before his tribunal. It would be well if, instead of branding him as the type of irreligious and profligate judges, his example, in the former part of his procedure, were recommended to Christian magistrates in these days for their universal imitation.

Such is the comment by which the history of Gallio is reconciled to the modern theory of State indifference. But when we read the text again, the illusion disappears. No special pleading can silence an instinctive feeling that Gallio's course is noted in censure, not in praise. His

indifference might practically work less evil than the zealotry of the Jews, but morally it was not less repulsive, and perhaps more hopeless. Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor, who had a zeal for God, was brought to repentance, and became the foremost of the Apostles; but nowhere do we find that Pilate, Gallio, or Felix, awoke from their cold, heartless neglect of the truth.

Our Lord had promised that the Gospel should be early brought before governors and kings, for a testimony to them and the Gentiles. In this manner Sergius Paulus and Dionysius were converted to the faith, and even Agrippa was almost persuaded to be a Christian. The first act of Gallio was to reject this gracious counsel of God against himself. In every other case, when St. Paul was brought before governors and kings, they heard from him the glorious tidings of Christ and His salvation. Gallio alone has the unhappy distinction, that he closed the way of life against himself, and stifled the voice of mercy before it found an utterance. 'When Paul was about to open his mouth,' he stopped him at once, and refused to hear the words of life, that he might indulge his contempt for the Jewish accusers. What Christian can dream that this is recorded to his praise?

What was his excuse for this abrupt decision? Was it hatred of injustice? This is disproved by his indifference, when Sosthenes was beaten before the judgment-seat. The true cause was a rooted contempt and indifference for religious truth. 'If it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it, for I will be no judge of such matters.' The real question was such that, compared with it, even the Roman empire was a mere



bauble, and all the causes Gallio had ever tried, the dust of the balance. It was one of eternal life and death, the main commandment of Him who is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Had Gallio known its nature, the contempt he expressed would have been the unpardonable sin. He might have known, and he refused to learn. Since it related to the worship of God, he took for granted that it was mere verbal trifling, unworthy of his thoughts, as if God himself were only an empty name. Can this be the example, we may well ask with surprise, which a Christian divine proposes to Christian magistrates for their universal imitation? But he made 'a correct and sensible distinction between cases of criminal jurisprudence and of religious casuistry.' A surprising apology! The truth or falsehood of the Gospel, the question whether Jesus of Nazareth were a worthless impostor, or the world's long-expected Redeemer, the Incarnate Son of God, and the King of kings; whether the Apostle were the servant of the Most High God, to shew men the way of salvation, or a reckless disturber of the public peace; the one thing needful for man to know, the sun in the firmament of truth, the centre of the whole scheme of universal Providence, dwindles down into a case of mere religious casuistry! Such an apology is no defence of Gallio. It is rather the crushing condemnation of a false theory of government, which can betray even good men, who receive it, into a line of thought so revolting to Christian faith.

The last words of the short history are indeed a key to the whole: 'He cared for none of these things.' His object was to spare himself trouble, and still to avoid the



risk of public disgrace. He had a heathen's contempt for the Jews, and a philosopher's contempt for religious zeal of any kind. To his unbelieving view the truths on which eternal life depends were questions of words and names only. The Gospel was within his reach, but he cared not to hear it. The laws of social justice and order were broken, and he cared not to maintain them. The only features conspicuous in his conduct are Roman pride, love of ease, and contempt for the worship of God. These were now overruled to stay the fierceness of Jewish persecution; but they were not, in their own nature, the less contemptible and hateful, and they stand here as a beacon against political neglect of Christ and His religion to the end of time. The history has a further lesson, that indifference in rulers to Divine truth, even under a show of zeal for social equity, is fatal to justice itself. When the claims of God are despised, justice will be replaced by a low expediency, and only chance will decide the exact nature of the wrong that will follow. Now and then a persecutor may be beaten deservedly, but unlawfully, before the judgment-seat. Much oftener the same maxims will imprison or behead an apostle or a martyr, just as once they consigned the Lord of Glory himself into the hands of His murderers.

XIV. Another argument may be drawn from the conduct of St. Paul in the whole course of that persecution, which sent him a prisoner to Rome.

And, first, the facts teach us how closely civil and religious questions must be united, wherever Christian faith reveals its living power. No one could be more careful than St. Paul to avoid needless offence, and no

rulers more careless than the Roman governors about abstract questions of religious truth. Yet, before the Gospel has been thirty years on its course, this Apostle has been tried on a charge of sedition before the high-priest and elders, two Roman governors, a king, and the Emperor Nero. Hundreds of soldiers, centurion after centurion, are employed to guard the prisoner. Royal consultations are held, and public audiences are given. Letters are sent from the chief captain to the governor, and from the governor to Cæsar. The whole empire, in every rank of its officials, from the spearmen of Cæsarea to the Emperor in the palace at Rome, is compelled to take cognizance of the new faith, and to decide whether it be a message from God, or a nuisance tending only to disturb the peace of society. At every step religious ignorance involves certain embarrassment to the civil ruler, and a direct temptation to commit flagrant wrong in deference to the ignorant passions of the people.

Again, on the neutral theory of government, the interference of the Romans, by which St. Paul was rescued from the Jews, was only a sinful usurpation. The cause on which he was tried was one of religion. The high-priest and elders were the highest ecclesiastical tribunal of the Jewish Church. The punishment of death is one which, by the law of Moses, they were bound to pronounce on certain religious offences, and they were only hindered in this case by the restraint of a foreign and heathen power. Every reason urged for the modern theory of liberationists might have been used by the elders, to prove that they should be left to deal with this prisoner by their ecclesiastical law, and in their own way.

This is the plea they advanced before Felix : ‘ Whom we took and would have judged according to our law. But the chief captain, Lysias, came with great violence, and took him out of our hands.’ They claimed that the church courts of the Jews should be exempt from the foreign interference of the civil power. Yet the whole scope of the sacred history condemns their claim. It shews that such an exemption, under whatever pretence it is sought, is an inlet to the most hateful oppression. The Roman governors only fulfilled their office, when they withheld from the high-priest and elders the power to commit judicial murders, without appeal, in the name of religion.

Again, how does the Apostle plead his cause before the governors ? Does he tell them that it is a question of outward sedition alone, and that with the religious truth or falsehood of his teaching they have nothing to do ? Such would have been his language, if State neutrality and indifference were the will of his Lord. His conduct is just the reverse. Three times in succession he pleads before a civil and heathen tribunal ; and in every instance the religious truth and propriety of his teaching and acts is one main ground of his apology. Before Felix he makes this the heart of his whole defence : ‘ But this I confess, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets : and have hope towards God, which they themselves allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.’ Even in his brief defence before Festus, he pleads that he was clear from any ecclesiastical offence

against the temple. Before Agrippa he dwells mainly on the facts of his conversion, and his commission from heaven to teach the Gospel both to Jews and Gentiles. Now if questions of religious truth and falsehood lay entirely beyond the province of the civil ruler, these defences were the treacherous surrender of a great principle of the Gospel, which he ought at whatever risk to have maintained. A clear exposition of the 'voluntary principle' should have replaced the unseasonable narrative of his own conversion; and the conduct of Gallio have been held up for the instruction of Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, instead of declaring his belief in Moses and the prophets, and the certainty of the future resurrection of the dead.

The essence of the negative theory is that rulers should decide every question of national duty on external and social grounds, without reference to religious truth and error, on which they are officially incompetent to decide. St. Paul's whole conduct is based on the opposite maxim, that knowledge of the truth, both in morals and religion, is the only real security for a just and equitable decision. It was their ignorance of the real nature and claims of the Gospel, which exposed the Roman governors to be deceived by the malice of his enemies. This was the main hindrance to a just decision, and he bends all his efforts to remove it. He has no sympathy with the maxim of Gallio, and of Gallio's modern disciples and admirers. He has to plead a religious cause before a civil government; and far from calling it a sacrilege and usurpation, he rejoices in the privilege, and thinks himself happy that Festus and Agrippa do not, like Gallio, forbid him to

open his mouth before them. He would lead them to decide justly in a criminal cause, but his first step is to persuade them, if possible, to become Christians. With him the authority of Christ, the King of kings, is no question 'of words and names' or religious casuistry, entirely outside the Governor's province. It is the source of all social wisdom, the fountain of political justice. His faith was of a far nobler school than that of modern liberalism, and prompted a wholly different style of apology. To ensure the triumph of equity, his main effort is to bring his judges to the knowledge of Christ, because he knew the name of that Lord, by whom alone 'kings reign and princes decree justice.' The command of the living God is the warrant he offers for his conduct, the promise made to the fathers the bulwark of his defence, the resurrection of Christ the proof of his innocence, and therein lies the strength of his appeal to the conscience of his judges. He pleads not so much for his own deliverance, as for the submission of the various heathen governors to the claims of his message, and to the voice of that Saviour who was exalted to be 'the light of the Gentiles.' In the State, as in the Church, before Festus and Agrippa, as in the meetings of the disciples and before the Jewish elders, Christ is with him the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, of all wisdom, equity, and truth, the Source of all wise counsel and every just decision. Faith in God's prophets is the lowly portal, by which he would usher all earthly rulers into the palace of political justice, and would teach them how to rule wisely and uprightly in the fear of God.



XV. THE DESCRIPTION OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT, Rom. xiii. 1-8.

In this well-known passage the Holy Spirit has briefly defined the true province of the Civil Ruler: 'He is the minister of God for good.' In the eye of sound reason the only true good is that which ministers to the moral and spiritual welfare of men. It follows at once that the Ruler, who would fulfil his office aright, is bound to take public cognizance of religious truth, and to make the true welfare of souls the final aim which underlies the whole course of his public activity.

Three objections have been brought against this argument. And first, rulers in the Church, as well as in the State, are ministers for good. If, then, the phrase includes spiritual good among the objects of civil rulers, it will authorise the rulers of the Church to interfere in civil concerns. Each is a minister for good, but not for good of every kind.

Now if the duty of the Civil Ruler to promote the spiritual good of the people involved a like duty of Christian ministers to promote the temporal good of their flocks, the conclusion, even if illogical, is neither perilous nor appalling. Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. The example of our Lord shews how naturally and wisely temporal benefits may be used to become the channel of spiritual blessings. The objection might with more reason be reversed. Since temporal good is not wholly excluded from the province of Church Rulers, we might thus infer that spiritual good is included within the objects lawful to be pursued and aimed at by the Rulers of the State. If the

objection means that, by including spiritual good within the aim of governors, their office is confounded with that of the Christian pastor, it is an evident fallacy. Both may agree in aiming at the same great object, and differ widely in the special means and agencies they have to employ. The dews that fall silently from heaven, and the mighty rivers that descend in torrents on the mountain side, may both unite in one common purpose, and contribute alike to the fertility and beauty of the land.

It is urged, again, that the words apply immediately to the Emperor Nero, and that to suppose the Apostle meant to invest him with any authority in religion is unutterably absurd. The application, then, if untrue in his case, must be untrue in every other.

This objection would be forcible and conclusive, if St. Paul were asserting a fact ; but since he is proclaiming a duty, it is unmeaning and worthless. In the former case the words would scarcely be true even in secular affairs ; for Nero was often a terror to good works, sometimes more than to the evil. But St. Paul is clearly stating the design of God's ordinance ; and because of its excellence, whatever abuses may obscure it, the Christian is bound to pay honour and obedience to civil magistrates. The Ruler may often fail to promote all the good, or repress all the evil, which lies within the range of his duty. He may thus fail even in secular things. But the law of duty remains unaltered. The bounds of his proper trust neither enlarge themselves with his virtues, nor contract themselves for his crimes. Whether Commodus or Nero, Josiah or David, sits on the throne, he is still the minister of God

for good, the highest and fullest good which is possible to be attained.

It is objected, further, that this wider view of the ruler's province for good must widen the range of the offences he may punish. This is a notion so alien from the spirit of the present age, that the bare statement is thought to be a full refutation. But this blind confidence in popular impressions is the sure mark of a shallow and unscriptural theology. The Word of God, in its portraiture of the last days, pours contempt on such vain reliance on their infallible wisdom. Our Lord was crucified between two thieves, and His truth has ever been exposed to popular reproach and infamy between opposite errors. There was a time when wise forbearance on the part of rulers was visited with public scorn. It was charged with opening the floodgates of profaneness. It was indifference to truth, heresy, and atheism. Now, on the contrary, to assert that any blasphemy against God, how gross soever, may be a social crime, is counted an insult to the understanding of a liberal and enlightened age. To say that rulers, God's ministers to execute punishment on evil, may ever punish the worst of all evils, idolatry, sorcery, and open profaneness, is called a fruit from the poison-tree of death. But wisdom, soon or late, will be justified by her own children. Truth is eternal, and neither contempt nor calumny can extinguish her immortal life. In times of persecution she condemns the foul abuse of power, which perverts God's ordinance, and applies it to the service of the devil. But in the last days, when men are selfish, covetous, proud, boasters, and despise dignities, she proclaims that rulers have indeed a Divine commission,

and are 'revengers to execute wrath on him that doeth evil.' No past abuses of authority, no fickle tide of popular opinion in a boastful age, can erase one letter from this ordinance of God. The nineteenth century will far sooner have to unlearn its fancied wisdom, than one jot or tittle of His word can pass away.

The words of the Apostle furnish many proofs that spiritual good is included within the Ruler's province. This results even from the source of his authority. He is the minister or servant of God. The good, then, he is to pursue, must be the same which forms the great object of the Divine government, moral and spiritual good, and temporal comforts only in subordination to these. A servant must consult the interests of his master, an ambassador must sustain the honour of his king. The Ruler, who is God's minister, must consider what benefits God's love chiefly delights to bestow, and make these his principal aim.

Again, he is 'a revenger to execute wrath on him that doeth evil.' But vengeance has just been declared to be God's prerogative, and forbidden to private Christians on this ground. And thus the power of the Ruler, in its very nature, is the permitted exercise of a Divine prerogative. No weaker foundation can sustain his authority, or justify his infliction of punishment on evildoers, than this glorious attribute of the Most High. If the foundation is so deep, the superstructure must be as lofty. What can be more unnatural than to degrade a glorious attribute and prerogative of God, and put it in requisition, to secure transitory objects alone? Since the sanctions of power are borrowed from His infinite justice, its scope must be borrowed from His

infinite mercy and goodness, and include the spiritual welfare of mankind.

In this whole passage private conscience and public authority, instead of being opposed, are inseparably blended together. Conscience must utter its voice in every act of civil obedience; and its own proper objects, moral good and evil, are the very province assigned to the civil ruler. Whether we contemplate the source of his authority, God himself; or the duty assigned him, to cherish good and suppress evil; or the faculty to which his commands appeal, the conscience of Christian believers; or the place assigned to these commands in the Christian scheme, with all spiritual graces to lead the way, and love and hope following after; the Holy Spirit here combines the most various elements, to prove that religion is first and last in the true conception of the kingly office. To divorce them is to murder the life of the State. When religious faith, its true soul, has been banished from every social ordinance, and religious neutrality enthroned in its stead, society must soon become a lifeless corpse, and turn to corruption.

XVI. THE EXHORTATION TO TIMOTHY, 1 Tim. ii. 1-3, is another witness, in the Apostolic Epistles, to the duty of the civil ruler. The argument, however, has been pronounced shadowy and worthless. 'Was there no other way in which Christians might be permitted to lead quiet and peaceable lives in godliness and honesty, except by the conversion of their rulers to the Christian faith, and their becoming legislators for Christianity, instead of opposing it? There was another. There was nothing



more necessary than their keeping to their own province, and letting religion alone.'

On closer search, the words of the Apostle will supply a very firm and solid argument, that the godliness of subjects is rightly included among the pursuits and aims of a righteous king. They may refer, in part, to the effect of such prayers on the minds of those who offer them. The spirit of grace and supplication is the best antidote to private strife and public rebellion. Those who pray and give thanks for all around them will be likely, above all others, to lead quiet and peaceable lives; and those who intercede daily for rulers will be the last to indulge in any form of seditious violence. But the words go further, and define the object of those prayers which Christians were to offer on behalf of rulers and kings.

What, then, was the nature of these prayers? The exposition just proposed is that they were not for the conversion of rulers, but for their neutrality; and that the last clause describes no aim which converted rulers were consciously to pursue, but merely the result, when unconverted rulers confine themselves strictly to their own worldly province.

Which of these expositions agrees with the context, and the scope of the exhortation? The next verses decide at once between them. The duty is there enforced by a powerful motive. 'For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.' On one view the sole object of the prayer is the personal

ease of these Christians, and their freedom from outward persecution. The conversion of rulers is not prayed for, but only that they may be kept from troubling the faithful. What could there be, in such prayers, so peculiarly good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour? He who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, would rather condemn such selfish and narrow-hearted petitions. The words are a clear proof that the prayers enjoined were to be, first of all, for the conversion of rulers to the faith. This explains at once why they were specially good and acceptable in His sight, who has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. It is useless, then, to inquire what results might follow from a neutrality of unconverted rulers, which Christians are nowhere taught to pray for. The fact is plain, that to secure quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty, the Apostles charge them to pray and intercede for the conversion of rulers.

What step, then, is wanting to complete the argument? An inference self-evident by its own simplicity. If Christians are to pray for the conversion of kings, to promote alike their own quiet and peace, and their own godliness and honesty, converted rulers ought directly to aim at all those objects on account of which their conversion has been ardently desired. The channel, in which the Holy Spirit guides the prayers of His people, must be the same in which He will guide the consciences of those in whom the prayer is fulfilled. If the peace of Christians is to be one aim of such monarchs, they must aim also to promote their godliness and honesty.

Such results must follow, as of course, when those in authority are 'saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.' Once let their hearts know the love of God their Saviour, and then, in spite of every theory of State irreligion, they must, 'above all things, seek His honour and glory, and study to preserve the people committed to their charge in wealth, peace, and godliness.'

This conclusion, plain of itself, is confirmed by the violence of the efforts used to escape from it, and set it aside. 'All that was wanted,' it is said, 'was that rulers would allow them to live in quiet, although they were to live godly.' But no trace of this contrast is found in the text. Godliness and honesty are as direct an object of the prayer as quietness and peace. The word *all* forbids any conditional sense. The clause can thus intend no logical restriction, but the free blossoming out of Christian holiness from the stem of faith, whenever, in peaceful times, it is favoured with the clear dews and bright sunshine of heaven. Quietness and peace, and along with these, godliness and honesty, in every various form, would be promoted by the genuine conversion of princes and kings. For all these benefits they were to pray, and for their attainment by these means; and kings and princes, when brought to the faith, were bound to include all these among the objects of their princely care. On the lovely stem of social peace they were to seek to graft every variety of godliness and honesty, and to make them bloom in perpetual fragrance throughout the land.

This view of the passage is no hasty conclusion of prejudiced minds. The best and wisest of the early Non-conformists viewed it in the same light. 'Let none per-

suade you,' says the profound and saintly Baxter, 'that you have nothing to do with the heavenly concerns of your subjects. There is no such thing as a temporal happiness to any people, but what tendeth to the happiness of their souls. It must thereby be measured, and thence be estimated. The very work and end of your office is that, under your government, the people may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty.'

One objection still remains. The words refer to the time then present. But no reasonable man can suppose that, during his own lifetime and that of the Apostles, St. Paul would teach others to pray that the legislative authority in the kingdom of Jesus Christ should be taken out of their hands by converted heathen magistrates. If not, what more could they do than let the Church alone?

It is argued, then, by the advocates of religious neutrality, that if kings in those early times had owned their public obligation to serve Christ, and to rule in His name, they must have begun by usurping the authority of the Apostles. If they had sought to base their laws on the Word of God, they would have despised its inspired penmen, and have substituted their own words for those which they had just learned to be words Divine. If they felt and practised their duty to spread Apostolic truth, their first step would of course be to depose and dishonour the Apostles from whom they received it. If they sincerely aimed to promote the true interests of the Church, they would be sure to practise rebellion against the lawful authority of its divinely appointed rulers. Let them once have earnestly set themselves to promote the glory of God and the salvation of men; and they would naturally be



led to despise the heralds of that salvation, and to set an example of rebellion against the ordinances of Christian faith and worship.

Is it still asked what such rulers could have done without usurping the place of the Apostles? The question is not hard to answer. The kingdom of darkness was not so narrow, nor so weakly founded, as to condemn royal converts to sit down with folded hands, instead of using zealous efforts for its overthrow. They might at once fulfil the prophecy — ‘kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship,’ and have openly adored the despised and crucified Nazarene. They might have forborne idol-offerings, and begun to purge out idolatry from the laws and institutes of the empire. As Barnabas took Saul and brought him to the disciples, they also might have brought the great Apostle before the senate and nobles, and have charged them to listen to his words, because they were a public embassy from the King of kings. They might have renewed the act of Hezekiah on a larger scale, and have sent messengers through the empire, saying, ‘Ye children of men, turn again to the Lord your God, who hath made heaven and earth, the sea and the dry land, and all that therein is, and he will turn again to you. Be not as your fathers, who have gone after vain idols; for the Lord God is merciful and gracious, and now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day when He will judge the world in righteousness.’ Like Hezekiah, they might have spoken comfort to all the prophets and teachers of the Church who taught the good knowledge of the Lord; and thus, like him, have ‘wrought that which was good and right



and truth before the Lord their God.' Like Josiah, they might have made an open covenant to walk after the Lord, and to keep His testimonies; especially those great commands, that they should believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ, and train their people to live in all godliness and honesty, as he had given them commandment.' In short, they might have copied the example of every pious king, which is left for their instruction in Holy Writ. They might have encouraged the good and reproved the evil, have helped on their way the messengers of peace, have published the truth of God by solemn proclamations, have cast aside the idols of their fathers, paid open worship to the Son of God, have presented their own offerings to the Church for works of love, have commanded their soldiers and exhorted their subjects to listen reverently to the Apostles of Christ, and thus have placed their throne in safety under the glorious canopy of the Gospel. To suppose them condemned to mere inaction, unless they were to usurp the place of the Apostles, is a strange delusion, which every page of history and prophecy scatters to the winds.

How simple and beautiful, on the other hand, is the lesson of this text when received in its plain meaning! The Church was still a little flock—poor, despised, and friendless; but it was not the purpose of God that His saving truth should be always shut up within these narrow bounds. The little grain of mustard-seed was to become a spreading tree. The waters from the sanctuary were to enlarge in breadth and depth in their onward flow. It was the will of God the Saviour that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

His people were to pray continually for these triumphs of the Gospel. And, as the first step to their attainment, they were to pray for the conversion of kings and rulers, and the recovery of civil power from mere worldliness and ambition to its true and right aim, the promotion of quietness and peace, with every blessed variety of godliness and honesty. This would be good and acceptable in the sight of God their Saviour. He who wills the great end wills also the means by which it would best be secured, and commands the union of both in the prayers of His people. He who delights in the salvation of men rejoices also when kings and princes, who are His servants, learn their true dignity, and become fellow-workers in the work of love to a fallen world. Not war and bloodshed, but quietness and peace—not the luxuries of Sodom, but godliness and honesty, are the objects he bids them pursue. Happy are the rulers who understand this true ideal of their office, and blessed are the people over whom they rule !

XVII. The Epistle to the Hebrews yields another testimony to the same truth, the religious element involved in the kingly office. The question to be answered is this : Is the office of the Civil Ruler, according to the New Testament, the protection of life and property alone by temporal motives, apart from religion, or does it include the care of true godliness, and the interests of the life to come ?

Now in the Epistles only one king, as such, is referred to by name, and that king is Melchizedec. There is no one in the Old Testament in whom the sacredness of royalty is so manifest, and no one else is named by his

royal title in the Apostolic Epistles, to furnish lessons to the Church of Christ. The very silence of Scripture in his case, the Apostle teaches us, has a deep meaning. Is there no lesson in the mention thus made of this one king and of no other? It seems clearly to point out the true ideal towards which the kingly office, redeemed from its corruption, must ever tend, the securing of national peace by national righteousness. And when he is further called 'the priest of the Most High God,' we are taught that the source of righteousness is the consecration of the whole being to God's service. These golden links can never be severed. Where holiness is lost, righteousness must wither away. Its loss will then be followed, sooner or later, by discord and confusion, if not by the plagues of Egypt and the doom of Gomorrah. How can Christians imagine that the proper ideal of royalty is to be kings of Mammon, when the only king invested with his royal title in these Epistles of the New Testament is Melchizedec, 'a king of righteousness and a king of peace.'

XVIII. One further testimony is found in the words of St. Peter, which describe the proud apostates of the last days: 'Presumptuous are they, self-willed; they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities (to blaspheme the glories). Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not a railing accusation against them before the Lord.'

This Divine warning should teach every Christian how unsafe a guide is the current of public opinion, and how foolish it must be to decide a Scriptural question by appeals to the wisdom of our age. Its boastings of superior light are no sign of truth and wisdom, whose dwelling

is with the lowly. If despising government is one feature of the last times, its sure attendant will be a severance of those ties which link human authority with the throne of God. The doctrine of State neutrality clearly prepares the way for the worst license of unbelieving minds in their contempt for the powers ordained of God. The aim of some pious men, in their advocacy of the doctrine, may be to promote the purity of the Church; but let the maxim prevail, and they cannot hinder its result in the open apostasy of nations. Where an epidemic prevails, even the healthy often suffer from the infection, and their strength is enfeebled, though they may escape the fatal disease. And thus the atmosphere of lawless pride and self-will, in the last days, may impair the faculties even of some pious men, and blind them to the true dignity of earthly rulers and kings.

But the passage supplies a more direct argument. These rulers are here styled by the Holy Spirit 'dignities' or 'glories.' Angels who excel in might have a charge to observe their conduct, and to report their obedience or disobedience in the courts of heaven. Those who place their happiness in sensual pleasure are pronounced incapable of understanding the true nature and objects of royal power. They speak evil of things they know not. But if the only province of kings in religious matters, as some tell us, is to have no province at all, these apostates would be nearer the truth than the inspired Apostle. How should those be styled 'glories' whose inglorious task is to care for bodily comfort alone, excluding all reference to the deeper wants of the soul? How should an office, in which the things of God have no place whatever, demand

the watchfulness of the angels, and be honoured by the special messages they bear continually into the presence of God? If the benefits of this life are its sole and proper aim, why should those who count 'riot in the daytime' the true pleasure be wholly unfit to decide on its value, or to pass sentence on the conduct of kings? Words could hardly be plainer, to shew that kingly power is far higher in its true nature than these new-born theories of the last days are willing to allow.

Rulers, then, are called 'glories,' because their authority is a glorious effluence from His supreme dominion, who is Lord of lords and King of kings. Their government is part of the kingly rule of the Most High, and angels bear continual reports into His presence whether these His servants are faithful to their trust, and rule in the fear of His name. The true end of their office is, first of all, to restrain the flood-gates of evil; and then to open the windows of heaven, and procure large blessings to the immortal spirits over whom they are set to rule. Those filthy dreamers, who live for this world alone, and look for no higher portion, can never understand the true nature of kingly power, or judge aright of its fulfilment. To earthly minds all things appear earthly. But those who, like the Apostle, have been on the mount with their Lord and caught some glimpses of His real glory, will rise to a worthier conception of this ordinance of God. No sins of rulers in past days, no current of passing opinion in a busy, earthly age, will blind their eyes to its revealed dignity and honour. They will never look upon kings, the commissioned servants of the Most High, as mere drudges for transitory and worldly objects alone, when once they



have seen the true King in His beauty, and caught some faint reflexion of His glory. They will see them, as the Apostle saw them, to be glories themselves, because they are His servants, whose glory was seen on the holy Mount. Others may see in them nothing more than dim tapers of earth, that shine for a moment with a lurid and transitory splendour, soon to die away. With spiritual minds they will resume their true character.. Christ is the true Source of all authority, to whom all power is given in heaven and earth. And rulers, by virtue of their office, are stars which He has planted with His own right hand in the firmament of power, and 'glories' to reflect, however dimly, the authority, justice, and holiness of the True and Everlasting King.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE JEWISH THEOCRACY.

THE Old Testament, even more fully and plainly than the New, establishes the duty of National Religion, and the inclusion of matters of religious faith and practice within the range of the kingly office. The histories of David, Hezekiah, and Josiah, of Cyrus and Artaxerxes, besides the direct precepts of the law of Moses, yield various and decisive evidence, that kings may and ought to lend their authority to the worship of God and the advancement of true religion. The only question that can be raised, with any show of reason, is how far these precepts and examples are still in force in the times of the Gospel.

Let us first consider the leading facts of the sacred history. One family were singled out by God from all the families of the earth for peculiar favour and blessing. When they grew into a nation, the first written oracles of God were committed to them in the infancy of their national life. While the world lay in heathen darkness, they were a Goshen of light, a lamp amidst the gloom of surrounding idolatry. The revelations made to them took the form of a national law, commended to them as wise

and good beyond all the laws of the heathen. Now this was one main feature of the Divine message, that every relation of life, every rank of society, every act of personal, domestic, and public life, was brought into the closest connexion with the name of God. To Him alone the priests were to offer sacrifice. For Him alone princes and kings were to rule. His law, in everything, was to be the guide of the nation, and all His gifts were to be rendered back in tributes of thanksgiving. Judges and rulers had a sacred character, and were to execute justice as the servants of the Most High. The same principle was in full operation from the time when Moses 'was king in Jeshurun,' and the princes dedicated the altar in the wilderness, until Ezra, the priest and scribe, received the royal decree to restore the temple-worship at Jerusalem. It was equally shewn in the pure theocracy under the judges, when Israel had no king but Jehovah, during the reigns of David and his successors, and after the captivity, when the tabernacle of David was broken down, and the gift of prophecy was withdrawn. It is not confined to the history of the Jewish rulers. The conduct of heathen princes, wherever they are introduced, is measured by the same standard; and their interference with religious matters, whether to ordain fasts for national sins, or to help on the rebuilding of God's temple, is recorded with praise, and hailed by the servants of God with thanksgiving. The world is clearly taught, by the history of Israel through so many ages, that allegiance to God, and the maintenance of His worship, free from adulterous corruptions, is the only path to national peace and honour, and that rulers are senseless and blind who refuse to make

this their highest aim. No single truth is more conspicuous, almost in every page of the Old Testament.

The appeal to these precedents, and the unbroken testimony of the Law and the Prophets, has, in these latter times of the Church, been loudly and vehemently condemned. It has even been called, by Professor Vinet and other adversaries of national religion, a pestilent error, born of deep ignorance, and issuing in the worst poison of intolerance, persecution, hypocrisy, and spiritual death. They say that it involves a return to all the bondage of the Jewish law; that a mutilated system, a demi-theocracy has no principle on which to rest; that the theocracy was a fact inimitable in its very nature; that the attempt to copy it is a sinful presumption; that its most essential element is wanting to every national establishment; that a false analogy is set up, and a true one destroyed, for the only true counterpart of the Jewish nation is the spiritual people of God. Finally, that this appeal involves, by necessary consequence, the worst forms of cruelty and religious persecution. Let us examine these strange assertions as the importance of the subject demands.

I. It is said that we must adopt the whole Jewish law, if we allow any argument from the example of the kings of Israel to determine the religious duty of Christian rulers. We must then restore all the rites and ceremonies of the elder covenant. If the theocracy cannot be wholly restored, it ought to be wholly abandoned.

This first objection is directly opposed to all sound theology. The positive laws of Moses have never been enjoined, either on Gentile nations or the Christian Church.

In neither way can they be now binding on a Christian State. But moral laws, and the great maxims of political wisdom and righteousness, are binding wherever they are revealed, in the Old Testament or the New. While themselves unchangeable, they need to be wisely applied to the varying conditions both of churches and nations. The objection is thus a mere shadow. We might as well say that by maintaining the authority of the command, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only thou shalt serve,' we bind ourselves to revive all the ceremonies of the law of Moses.

The other maxim implied in the objection is still more pernicious; that when an ideal standard cannot be wholly realized, it must be wholly abandoned. If the principle of a Church-State, or State honouring the Church, cannot be attained in their completeness, we may turn our backs upon it, as Churchmen or as Statesmen, and adopt in its place the maxim of religious neutrality. Apply the same maxim to science and morals, and what fatal anarchy will ensue! We cannot calculate the planetary motions with perfect accuracy; therefore the work of our observatories must cease, and the Newtonian philosophy be cast aside. We cannot steer a vessel exactly in the line our chart requires as shortest and best; therefore we may let her drift at the mercy of the waves, or reverse her course, and steer in the opposite direction. We cannot perfectly keep God's commands; therefore, 'since they cannot be wholly realized, they must be wholly abandoned.' The wildest dreams of anarchy, and the lowest depths of vice, are justified by the same maxim, which has been so boldly advanced as conclusive against the claims of national religion.



Such reasonings, which would reverse the standard of the Ruler's duty, because every actual religious establishment is imperfect, are pernicious as theology, and hollow and worthless as arguments. Everywhere we are bound to set before us a high standard, and, whether attained or not, to strive upward to its attainment. Every Christian falls far short of the example of Christ. Must he then renounce the attempt to walk in His footsteps? Whatever can shew that we have set up a false standard has a just claim to be weighed with care. But to call on Christians to renounce a principle interwoven with the whole texture of God's word, because it can be only partially realized in our sinful world, is one of the worst forms of moral blindness. When the Scriptures everywhere set before us this noble ideal, where true religious faith and the fear of God are first and last in the national counsels, our duty is to labour upwards towards the divine pattern, even in times when declining faith and decaying hope may threaten most to thwart the effort, and condemn the witnesses for truth to sackcloth and silence. Darkness may cover the earth, and gross darkness the people, but God's truth is eternal, and must prevail at last.

The principle of what has been styled in contempt, a demi-theocracy, is consistent and plain. Rites and ceremonies may vary, but the great outlines of moral duty between rulers and people are fixed and unchangeable. All Scripture proclaims it to be the duty of governors to care directly for the maintenance of God's worship among their people, and to render public homage to His word and supreme dominion. Again, when we see a Divine standard of right, we must strive upwards towards it, and

never dare, because our attainments are imperfect, to turn our backs upon the vision, and plunge ourselves contentedly into the darkness. Religious establishments have always been very imperfect in this world of sin. But still, when seen by the eye of faith, they are a morning-star of hope, rising above the fogs and mists of worldliness, to herald the approach of that kingdom, where the true Melchizedec will reign, and the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings.

It has been urged, further, that the theocracy is incapable of imitation. Were God to adopt another nation as His peculiar people, to place His name, and institute special forms of worship among them, to manifest His presence by appropriate symbols, and become Himself their Judge, Lawgiver, and King, assuming by miraculous administration the reins both of civil and ecclesiastical authority, then only should we have a counterpart to the Mosaic institution. Till then we are imposed on by a mere name, and the essence of the thing imitated is wanting in the pretended imitation.

A conclusive reply has been made to this objection from the example of our Lord. His obedience was of a character so peculiar and unique as to place it beyond the reach of imitation. It was a spotless, meritorious, atoning obedience. Is not then the total rejection of an example, because of some inimitable peculiarity, in direct opposition to Scripture, which says that Jesus Christ left us an example, that we should follow His steps? The same argument which cuts off a Christian king from all imitation of Jehovah, the king of Israel, cuts off a Christian man from all imitation of Jesus of Nazareth.

This analogy may be carried still further. Three elements concurred in the whole course of our Lord's obedience: the spotless perfection by which it satisfied the claims of the law; the moral beauty which makes it an example to His followers; and the special features of His Jewish birth and descent, His eastern abode and habits of life, and His calling as a prophet and teacher of the people. In the first, imitation is not only hopeless, but would be a presumptuous invasion of His Divine prerogative. With regard to special circumstances, the places where His life was spent, &c., strict imitation would be either impossible, or unmeaning and absurd. With the moral features it is very different. Here imitation is an absolute duty, binding on every Christian, and he who denies its obligation is an apostate from the faith.

Three similar elements co-exist in the Jewish theocracy. It has its Divine element, like our Lord's obedience, in the descent on Mount Horeb in fiery flame, the direct revelation of oral and written laws from heaven, and frequent miraculous interpositions. It has its moral element, in the deeply religious character of the whole polity, the maxims of royal duty and social wisdom which pervade the whole system of laws, the great object proposed, of the spiritual training and instruction of the whole people, and the lessons prescribed and the jurisdiction assigned to the judges, princes, and kings of Israel. It has also special features which result from the time and place of the Levitical institution, the habits of the people addressed, the infant stage of revelation, and the idolatry of the heathen world around. To imitate the theocracy, in its first aspect, would be vain and presumptuous. To

copy Jewish and temporary details would be absurd, no less than to wear the tunic and recline at meals, in strict imitation of our blessed Lord. But the duty of kings to render open homage to God, to profess themselves His ministers, and make the honour of His name a chief object of their care, is a moral element of the theocracy, as firm and sure in its obligation on all rulers, as the moral features of our Lord's obedience are binding on the imitation of every true disciple. 'He that ruleth over men' must still be 'just, ruling in the fear of God.' The book of God must not depart out of his mouth, but he must meditate continually therein, for then only his way will be truly prosperous. His eyes must be on the faithful of the land. Like David, he will rejoice before God, and encourage his people to willing offerings for the service of the Most High. Like Hezekiah, he must still help and encourage those who teach the good knowledge of the Lord. Like Josiah, he must help with all his might to restore a corrupt and degenerate church, to renew a pure worship, and to avert God's anger from the nation by acts of public humiliation for national sins. To absolve rulers from the force of all these precepts and examples of Scripture, because the miracles of the theocracy are beyond their imitation, is a fatal error. It saps the very foundations of Christian morality, and is revolting to the instincts of every pious heart, which has learned to reverence the words of God.

It is urged, further, that the institution of a National Church, where the government was Divine, is no ground for inferring God's approval of a national Church, where the government is merely human. The

leading feature of religious establishments, human legislation with regard to religion, was wholly wanting in the Jewish economy. The laws were all from God himself. The judges and kings had no authority to enact a single statute of their own, or to innovate on one article of the constitution.

This contrast is the sinew of the argument, which forbids all appeal to the precedents of the Old Testament, to determine the duty of Christian rulers. But in reality it joins together the besetting sins of two dispensations, Jewish superstition and Gentile unbelief, so as to blot out the main lesson of God's providence towards the nations for four thousand years.

And, first, the view of the theocracy on which it rests embodies the worst essence of Jewish superstition. 'The Jews require a sign.' 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.' This perverse desire for outward marvels, and neglect of the higher truths these wonders were designed to awaken in their hearts, was the special evil which grew up under the shadow of the theocracy, and issued at last in the contemptuous rejection of our Lord, under the plea of requiring from Him a sign from heaven.

What was the true design of the Jewish theocracy? Why did such signs and wonders mark its origin, and gleam out from time to time in the current of its later history, like stars reflected dimly in some deep river? Did the Most High become specially the King of the Jews, that He might teach men to deny His universal dominion on heaven and earth? Did He work miracles in Egypt and the wilderness, that men might thence-



forth ascribe all events to the blind course of nature, unless new signs should visibly attest the presence of the Almighty? Were His special mercies to Israel meant to destroy faith in His universal bounty, or only to kindle it into a brighter flame? Is not this the one great lesson taught and taught again with ceaseless iteration by the whole course of His mercies to Israel? 'Know that the Lord your God is God in heaven above and in earth beneath; there is none else. Behold, the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, and they that dwell therein: only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to choose them and their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.' The voice of the prophets was constantly raised against the cold, blind, wonder-worshipping spirit of the carnal Jews, who would not learn God's love to mankind in His love to Israel, nor His ceaseless hourly providence in His wonderful works to their fathers, nor the majesty of His universal dominion, through the emblems of royalty set up, to help their faith, among the chosen people. To their dull, earthly eyes, the sign and wonder, the rite and ceremony, became the essence of the theocracy; instead of seeing them to be a mirror of God's condescending love, to reflect the everlasting truths of the ceaseless providence, the Almighty power, and the supreme dominion, of the God of Israel, the pollution of sin, the need of sacrifice, and the blessedness of hearts reconciled to God, that walk with freedom in the way of His commandments. After all the rebukes of the prophets, this superstition gathered strength from age to age. We see its full ripeness in the Gospel history, where even the miracles of our Lord

failed to break the spell ; where the miracle of the loaves only led to the petition for a shower of manna, and the healing of the blind and dumb to the contemptuous demand for a sign from heaven.

Now when the essence of the theocracy is made to consist in its miracles, instead of those deeper truths which these were designed to impress on their hearts, the providence and dominion, the holiness and justice, the sovereignty and grace, of the living God ; there the Jewish delusion has revived in a new form, and the main purpose of the whole economy is blotted out and destroyed. Instead of being a witness, to all ages and nations, of the rightful claims of God on all His creatures, and on every tribe of the earth ; it is now a poor quit-rent, paid Him once for all by one petty state, that all others may be absolved from the duty of rendering public honour and reverence to His holy name. This is to put darkness for light. It turns upside down the whole edifice of moral truth, which God has been rearing for ages, in the sight of the whole world, by the history of the chosen people.

Miracles were not the essence of the theocracy. Its essence was the real dominion of God, steadfastly and devoutly believed, and linked with special favour to His people Israel, and a covenant of peculiar love. Signs and miracles were a supplement, because of the weakness of their faith, to awaken them from sensuality and superstition, and revive their hold on the great realities of the unseen world. Human agency was not excluded, but was the constant channel of Divine authority. Their prophets, priests, and kings, were men of like passions with ourselves ; and it needed then, as now, a constant effort of

faith, to realize the voice and presence of God in His own ordinances. There were false prophets, corrupt priests, idolatrous kings. The same wisdom was needed then, as in Christian times, to distinguish the ordinance from its abuse, and in spite of the abuse to retain a lively faith in the real presence of the Almighty. The people were called upon to discern true prophets from the false, to reject in some cases the evidence of real signs, which might mislead them into idolatry, to obey the sentence of the priest or judge as the voice of God himself, and still to reject it, when it set aside the law of supreme love and exclusive worship to the God of Israel. In this sense the theocracy was unique, peculiar, inimitable, that it was a telescope, and the only telescope, formed by God's own hand to assist weak eyes in gazing on a world of holy and everlasting truth. The telescope may be laid aside, but the landscape does not thereby become less real, nor do the stars cease to shine as brightly as before. The miracles were occasional and rare. The rites and ceremonies of the Levitical law had a special purpose, and were suited to the twilight of spiritual knowledge. But the dominion of God, exercised not only by Urim and Thummim, but by fallible and sinful priests, judges, and kings, was a ceaseless dominion, the great object which faith had then, as always, to apprehend. The faithful Jew was called to rise beyond all that was local and temporary to the eternal truth itself, and to bear witness of this Divine sovereignty to all other nations. The curse of the heathen consisted in their blindness to this great truth. The chosen people were often tempted to lose sight of it, either from the pressure of Gentile idolatry, or by the subtler snare of a

merely ceremonial worship, from which the inner life of faith had passed away.

Viewed in another aspect, the same objection borrows no less largely from Gentile unbelief than from Jewish superstition. It assigns a merely human character to all modern government, whether in the Church or the State. Now the peculiar glory of the Christian dispensation is the closer and fuller presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church of Christ, and in all its faithful members. God's presence with His people is thus declared to be even more intimate than in the days of old. In the face of this Scripture doctrine, the argument alleges that the Jewish theocracy was purely Divine, but all Christian establishments, in their very nature, apart from their possible abuse, strictly and exclusively human. Man only is seen on the theatre of Providence in the latter times, and the presence of God, even in His own most sacred ordinances, is denied or forgotten. The links which faith is ever renewing between the servants of God, and Him who sends them, are thus rent asunder. We are taught to look on rulers as having no commission from the Almighty, and the whole Church as a mere human confederacy, where there is no power nor abiding presence of the Spirit of God.

Such is not, however, the doctrine of Holy Scripture. God's presence is to be seen, by humble and reverent minds, in His own ordinances. The Ruler is not merely a man. He is a minister of God ordained by the Supreme King, a visible sign of His authority, who sitteth King above the waterfloods of time for ever and ever. The pastors of the Church are not merely men of like passions with ourselves. They are ambassadors for Christ, who

beseeches sinners by their mouth, and speaks in their messages with a voice from Heaven: 'He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me.' To rest on the earthly ordinance as a final authority would indeed be a subtler form of idolatry, and defeat the end for which it was ordained. Though rulers are called gods by reason of their office, they may sometimes walk on in darkness, and be faithless to Him from whom they derive their power. False teachers may be mingled with true pastors; and even true ministers of Christ, like St. Peter, may err for a time, and corrupt or deny the truth which they ought to maintain. To rest on the ordinance is idolatry. But to look reverently through the ordinance to Him who has ordained it; to read His will in the commands of the Ruler, or the message of the Christian teacher; to try all by the Word of God, and reject whatever contradicts its plain teaching, but in all beside to hear His voice speaking to us from heaven; in the breathing of Nature's harmony, and the whispers of the winds, and voices of the waves; in the usages of Christian society, the laws of Christian States, and the messages of the Gospel; this is the duty of every Christian, the daily exercise of faith in a world of sin, till we come to that kingdom where we shall see God face to face, and know even as we are known. Every opposite view, even if held by pious men, is a poison-fruit from the tree of Gentile unbelief. It is part of the predicted moral darkness, that would cover the earth in the latter times of the Gospel, until the recovery of Israel shall be life from the dead, and an era of richer faith and clearer light shall dawn upon the world.



It is a great mistake to suppose that, under the theocracy, there was no place at all for human legislation. Every law of God had to be applied, by temporary regulations, to the varying wants and circumstances of the people from age to age. Every command issued by a lawful authority is a law to those who are bound to obey. Now the direction in the books of Moses to appoint judges and officers in all the gates, and to go up to the place that the Lord would choose, and there to hearken to the decision of the priest, implied the future existence of many laws, not explicitly revealed in Scripture, and yet binding from time to time on the obedience of the people. The commands of Joshua were laws to those who entered on the war with Canaan, and whoever disobeyed was to be punished with death. The oath of the congregation at Shiloh was a law to the people, and whoever broke the covenant had to endure the penalty. Solomon's charge was a law to Shimei, and the transgression of it was punished as an open crime. The feast of Purim, appointed by Esther and Mordecai, became a law to the whole nation, and the Holy Spirit has given it a public sanction in the Scriptures. The difference was here, that no later laws were suffered to rank with the commands given by Moses, but were only subordinate to these Divine ordinances, by which God had entered into public covenant with His people.

The character of Christian Establishments, when we look below the surface, is the same. The right of kings to choose what religion they please for their subjects may describe the infidel theory of Hobbes; but as applied to the views of Augustine or Calvin, of Hooker or Baxter, of

the English Articles or the Scotch Confession, or any sober advocate of national religion, no description could be more calumnious, and wider from the truth. Their common maxims are these: that kings, magistrates, and clergy, are all bound alike to obey the Word of God; that no ordinance of Christ may be set aside by human authority; and that the moral right of establishments and their laws depends on their freedom from any real contradiction to the truths and precepts of the Gospel. They only maintain that rulers in Church and State, like the Jewish priests and kings, have a dependent and derived authority; that they are to be honoured and obeyed in its lawful exercise; that injudicious acts are not therefore unlawful, and will not release the citizen or Christian from all obligation to obey; and that where the lawfulness is in dispute, the final appeal must be to the judgment-day, to decide whether the command is an act of iniquity, or the disobedience a sinful rebellion. Finally, that the two spheres of civil and ecclesiastical authority, the purer and fuller their exercise, blend more closely together. Christian pastors are bound to advise, encourage, or reprove, and even to visit with church censures for public wrongs, the rulers who have enrolled themselves disciples of Christ. On the other hand, the Christian Ruler is bound to promote the welfare of the Church by encouraging faithful ministers, punishing the immoral and profane, and discountenancing every form of mischievous superstition. Instead of contrast, there is an exact resemblance to the office and duties of the kings and priests of Israel. A difference arises from the more spiritual nature of the Gospel, and its more scanty rules and lessons of outward

worship. Thus a wider field is left for the whole range of civil legislation, and for human arrangements of church order ; while a general caution is implied against the danger of entangling the Church, by multiplied rubrics, and a cumbrous and artificial directory, under a hurtful yoke of ceremonial bondage. When this caution is observed, the analogy is complete, and ‘ the prerogative given always in Holy Scripture to all godly princes by God himself,’ abides unchanged, and in all its force, under the dispensation of the Gospel.

The further objection that the real type in the history of ancient Israel is set aside by a national establishment, and a false analogy set up, is wholly untrue. St. Paul, in 1 Cor. x., plainly compares Israel in the wilderness to the mixed multitude of baptized Christians, and closes with the declaration : ‘ All these things happened unto them for types, and are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.’ There is some analogy, doubtless, between the providence of God to Israel as a people, and the spiritual discipline of the church of true believers. But for every main purpose of personal warning, or political and ecclesiastical guidance, the closest analogy is between the circumcised and the baptized, between the faithful Jews and true Christian believers, between the priests and prophets of the law, and the commissioned teachers of the Gospel, between Christian rulers and the princes of Israel. It is this relation, not the other, to which the name of type has been expressly given by the Spirit of God, and to deny its reality contradicts flatly His divine message. Nay, since the last command of Christ to his Apostles was to disciple all nations,

the idea of a nation of professed disciples, though that profession may be imperfect, is not foreign from the language and hopes of the New Testament. It is a fact which was to exist, soon or late, if the command of Christ was obeyed. History and prophecy united to confirm its truth, for kings were to arise, and princes to worship, at the feet of Christ.

The covenant of works has been abrogated by the death of Christ, who is 'the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' The ceremonies of the law are forbidden by the Church to be imposed on Gentile believers, to whom they were never given, and their comparative worthlessness, in every case, has been revealed. The exclusiveness of Jewish privilege has also come to an end. But the law and the prophets, as a witness of Divine truth, a treasure-house of heavenly wisdom, rich with moral lessons for all classes and ranks of Christians, and all later ages, continue in unabated authority; and, until heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle of them will not pass away. 'Whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments,' those lessons of moral duty they contain, 'and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.' But the duty of kings and rulers to hear and obey the word of God, to rule in the fear of His name, and maintain with their whole authority the pure worship of God according to His revealed will, is by no means one of the least, but rather one of the greatest, of these commandments. Those who abrogate a lesson, so plain in every part of their teaching, so agreeable to the instinctive voice of conscience, and not only unrevoked, but confirmed in the New Testament, fall under our Lord's

rebuke, and condemn themselves to be ranked among the least in the kingdom of heaven.

The last objection against the appeal to Old Testament precedents and commands is the supposed tendency to intolerance and persecution. This argument is peculiarly effective at the present day. Real benevolence in Christians, and indifference to religious truth in worldly men, have formed a temporary and hollow league. While this union lasts, vague invectives against persecution will be highly popular ; and the pamphlets and daily journals of the nineteenth century will be accepted, even by many Christians, as a safer guide on this subject than the inspired Word of God. But wisdom, soon or late, will be justified of all her children. Those who declaim most loudly in favour of liberty of conscience are not always its truest friends. When sinners, in their folly and pride, dare to defame three-fourths of God's Word as a dangerous treasury of the worst maxims of persecution, the Providence of God will, in due season, pour contempt on their false claims to superior benevolence, and vindicate the wisdom and truth of His own messages.

This whole charge, of a persecuting tendency in the appeal to the Old Testament, has its source in the loose impressions of the day, among those who neither understand the real essence of persecution, nor the true harmony of the Divine dispensations. Penalties upon sin become persecution, when they neglect the higher law, which links grace with righteousness in the ways of God to man. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.' Yet neither attribute could be revealed, in a practical manner, without borrowing from



that to which it seems opposed. The law of Moses was rich in earnestness of the fuller grace of the Gospel. And the Gospel, again, in its practical code, has deep holiness and solemn warnings, strong injunctions to obedience whether to civil rulers or the pastors of the Church, and severe threatenings against those who disobey. All vengeance on evil is forbidden to private Christians. Restraint on evil must therefore be vested in the rulers in Church and State. The rulers of the Church have plainly the power of spiritual censure alone, and all beyond must belong to civil rulers. The difficulties of their task are as great as in Old Testament times, perhaps even increased by the license which abuses the Gospel. Their office is as sacred as before, the need for it as great, the evil to be restrained as powerful, the helps for its wise fulfilment increased. Who then can believe that its sphere has been greatly contracted, and that they are now wholly forbidden to attempt a task, their noblest work under the earlier dispensation, the promotion and maintenance of a pure worship, and the public consecration of themselves and the whole State to the service of the God of heaven?

When once these vague and groundless alarms have been cleared away by a juster view of God's dispensations, the law and the prophets become like a flood of heavenly light, to reveal the duty of Christian rulers. The notion of some in these days, that they lend us no light on the subject whatever, is one of the wildest paradoxes to which the spirit of delusion ever gave birth. The means to be used in the advancement of true religion, like the rites of the law, must vary with the circumstances of every State,

the moral elevation of its people, and be moulded by the genius of the Gospel as a message of grace. In times of gross idolatry and sensual debasement, sterner means may be required to stem a tide of corruption, than can be used without mischief in times of greater light and moral refinement. The examples of the Old Testament need to be cast into the mould of a more forbearing tenderness, and, as it were, baptized anew in the tears of our Lord over Jerusalem, before they can be a perfect guide to Christian kings and statesmen. But the main outlines of royal duty remain unchanged in their impressive grandeur: 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.' His duty is still, like Melchizedec, the king of Salem, to bless the servants of God and encourage them in their warfare with evil; like Moses, the king in Jeshurun, to obtain wisdom by communion with God, whereby to expound His laws aright, to publish wise ordinances, and execute justice between man and man; like Joshua, to meditate continually on the Word of God, that he may prosper alike in peace and war; like David, to consult God's oracles in every hour of public danger, and to consecrate the national wealth, gained through God's blessing, to the service and honour of Him who has bestowed it; like Solomon, to provide sanctuaries for holy worship, and offer public vows for the maintenance of true faith and holiness among the people of his care. Time would fail to record all the holy and gracious actions of righteous kings, in promoting the glory of God and the spiritual welfare of His people, which have all been written for our guidance, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Happy are the rulers who, undeterred

by the fear of man, and by vain theories in which the Word of God is set aside, labour continually to attain the high standard of their sacred and honourable calling. The Prince of the kings of the earth, from whom they derive their authority, will look down upon them with an eye of holy love, to cheer them in their work, and establish their throne in righteousness, as an earthly image, though imperfect, of His higher and more enduring kingdom. The nation and kingdom that refuse to serve Him must perish. Its root will be rottenness, and its blossom as the dust. But those which publicly honour Him by the open confession of His truth, and the maintenance of a holy worship, will receive a blessing at His gracious hands. The Christian Ruler, no less than the Christian pastor, who has owned and served the Lord in his high office, will receive a blessed welcome from His lips, when the shadows of time shall pass away, and will be promoted to reign for ever as a king and priest in the kingdom of God.

## PART II.

### ON CHURCH ESTABLISHMENTS.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE KINGLY OFFICE IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

THE duty of National Religion, in its wider sense, results from the instincts of conscience, the voice of reason, and the consenting testimony of the whole Word of God. The kingly office is no product of chance. It is an ordinance of God himself for the good of man. The ruler is no 'secular animal, to care only for the things of the body.' He is the minister and servant of God, and whether he owns it or not, it is by the grace of God that he rules. He is bound, then, by a double obligation, both as a man and a ruler, to believe and obey the Gospel, to pay open reverence to the God of heaven, and to help the great work of training the people, over whom he rules, to use the present life as the seed-time for a better life to come. This truth is firm and sure as the pillars of heaven. False theories may hide it for a moment from the eyes of too many Christians; but, whenever the mist and darkness of their spiritual senses is removed, it must shine out afresh in its eternal beauty.

This great obligation would have rested on kings and rulers from the very nature of their office, if the Church of Christ, as a visible institution, had never come into being. But since He, by whom kings reign, has founded that Church for the communion of His disciples, the spread of the Gospel, and the worship of God in spirit and in truth, out of this great fact new duties must arise. What relations, then, ought to exist between the Church of Christ, and those rulers who have embraced the Gospel? Here the general duty of National Religion begins to assume a special form. In what sense, and to what extent, does National Religion involve a National Church? What are the natural relations, in a well-ordered Christian State, between civil and ecclesiastical authority, the altar and the throne?

The Church of Christ, in the highest sense of the word, is an object of faith. It consists of the whole multitude of the redeemed, who will meet in the presence of the Lord at His coming. It is called 'His body, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all,' and 'the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.' Those members of it, who are now on earth, are indeed separately visible to the eyes of men. But the secret bonds which unite them, the faith by which they cleave to Christ, the love of God in their hearts, the power of the Spirit by which they are upheld, are invisible, and are concealed more or less even from their fellow-Christians. In this sense the true Church is invisible. Its members are visible and discernible as men, as citizens, as members of some external society, civil or ecclesiastical; but the Searcher of hearts alone



can discern infallibly that faith, hope, and love, which make them Christians indeed, and members of that 'mystical body of Christ, which is the blessed company of all faithful people.' Still every Christian, as he grows in wisdom and holiness, gains a clearer knowledge of the brotherhood of faith to which he belongs, and learns to distinguish more and more truly between the form of Christianity and its living power.

But man is composed of body and soul; and religion, to be in harmony with his nature, must include some outward observances, as well as inward convictions of the mind and affections of the heart. These are helps to the weakness of faith, practical tests of obedience, and witnesses for truth before the world. The communion of saints is rendered more complete, by their common observance, of those precepts which their Lord has enjoined on them, for the public confession of His name before the eyes of their fellow-men.

What, then, is the duty of a Christian Ruler, who has learned from the Word of God the claims of Christ to public homage, and the obligation of National Religion, when he learns from the New Testament the institution of the visible Church of Christ? In obedience to the voice of Christ he must publicly enter the communion of the faithful. He will be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and unite himself to the assembly of Christian people. He must now enter on a world of new duties, that appeal with equal power to his understanding and his heart. As a member of the Church militant here on earth, he becomes subject to its ordinances, a brother of all its members, an heir of its

glorious hopes of a heavenly inheritance, and a fellow-labourer in all its works of love. The new relation cannot leave him unchanged. It is a leaven that must leaven the whole lump of his social activities and royal obligations. Let us examine the natural consequences in the mutual relations between such ruler and the Church of Christ.

The first duty of the Christian King or Ruler must be the consecration of his own heart, soul, and mind, to the service of Christ. He now learns himself to be a sinner, redeemed by the blood of the Son of God, the servant of a Master in heaven, with whom is no respect of persons. He is not his own, but bought with a price. This truth must imprint itself on all the acts of his public life. The love of pomp and outward splendour will be replaced by deep seriousness of spirit, unfeigned humility, love to Christ, and obedience to His commands. The weight of royal example will now be given to the cause of Christian truth and piety. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. The religious faith of rulers, when it burns with a pure and steady flame, will be a beacon-light to thousands. The Church has no fairer prospect of wide extension, and lasting moral victories, than when, in fulfilment of the promise, 'kings see and arise, and princes also worship' at his footstool, who alone is Prince of the kings of the earth.

National Religion, when the Ruler thus becomes a consistent member of Christ's Church, becomes a full tribute from earth's noblest children to their Father in heaven. When those who occupy the high places of worldly power begin to sit, like Mary, at the feet of their Lord, and

consecrate all their power and greatness to Him who has redeemed them with His blood, then truly the days of heaven are begun on earth. The forms of National Religion, when the life is departed, fill good men with grief and shame, and supply bad men with ample subjects for taunts and mockery. But once let the life be restored by true piety in the hearts of rulers, and the reproach is rolled away, and its real beauty reappears. It becomes the admiration of earth, and the rejoicing of heaven.

One result which must follow, when rulers enter the Christian Church, is public and official acts of Christian worship. The general duty will assume a special form. For the rank of kings, princes, and statesmen, can never excuse them from the common obligation of all disciples. It even lays on them obligations peculiarly their own. They too must worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord their Maker; they must enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.

It is the voice of reason that all the counsels of princes and statesmen, and acts of public rule, should be hallowed by prayer for the guidance and blessing of God. If the interests involved are great, and the issues most weighty, the acknowledgment of God should be public and solemn. But the worship of all members of the Church must conform to its ordinances, and be guided by the revealed will of Christ. Whenever kings and senates receive the Gospel, honour must therefore be given to Christ's appointed ministers, and the chief solemnities of the State be linked with the sacred services of the Christian Church.

The Christian Ruler, then, in every public duty, must have his heart and mind moulded and attuned by the worship of the Church of God. He will look daily for light, strength, and wisdom, in answer to the prayers offered in his presence, and with his consent and sympathy, by the ministers of Christ. And even this alone is a total contrast to the theory of strict religious neutrality, and an absolute and utter severance of Church and State. Such prayers and vows as these would surely be most unnatural. ‘Grant me, O thou King of nations, in answer to the prayers Thy ministers now offer before Thee, the blessing of Solomon, the grace of wisdom needful to govern this great people, and to rule in the fear of Thy name. In return I vow solemnly that I will never meddle with Thy Church, either for good or evil; that I will do no public honour to its ministers; that I will never count it a fit object of royal favour. I will so legislate and rule as if every doctrine of Thy word were utterly uncertain, and will never attempt to use my royal influence and authority for the cause of Thy truth, or to help forward the salvation of the souls which the Son of God has redeemed with the His precious blood. I will never, like Solomon, build a house to Thy name, nor recount to them the mercies of former days, nor charge them, like him, that their heart be perfect with the Lord their God, and that they should keep Thy commandments always.’ How can such a vow, from the lips of a Christian monarch, be reconciled with the prayers offered by the Church on his behalf, or fulfil the description of the Apostle, and be ‘an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God?’

Again, the office of adviser and counsellor to the king has always been reckoned among the highest political honours. All experience and common sense unite to place it among the most weighty of public functions. In most countries this truth gives birth to distinct and well-known titles of honour, as in the great council of Parliament, the privy council, and cabinet council of our own land, on which our national constitution mainly depends. Great odium has always attached to stealthy and secret whispers, which replace the public counsellors of the land by some hidden influence that works in darkness; whether these be the palace favourites of Roman Emperors, Jesuit directors of royal conscience, or other secret and too often immoral intriguers of modern times. The people have a just and natural claim that advice given to their monarch, which affects the general happiness, shall be, in point of personal responsibility, though not in its details, frank, public, open, not stealthy and concealed. It is the most weighty charge a subject can fulfil, which raises him to a certain share in the royal power; and the highest places in national honour are accorded freely, by general consent, to those in whom such a trust is reposed.

Now where is a Christian king, who has enrolled himself among the disciples of Christ, to look for wise and faithful counsellors? Among those who reject the Son of God, and count Him a foolish enthusiast, or an impostor and blasphemer? Can those who know not God, and have no love to Christ, see clearly the true aim of right government, the best remedies for crime, the true



source of national welfare? Can those who are rebels against the commandment of the everlasting God furnish wise counsel to His servants and ministers in the fulfilment of their high office? Can those who despise the Word of God, the great source of moral truth and wisdom, read wisely the signs of the times, or discern between the dangerous appetites and blind passions, and the just and lawful desires and wants, of the people for whose benefit they are to advise? Can infidels, as some would have us believe, raise the moral tone of a Christian Parliament? All this is clearly impossible, until the salt has lost its savour, and so-called Christians have become blinder and darker than the heathens themselves. A Christian king can never, without madness and impiety, seek his chief advisers among those who deny his Lord, reject His word, and disown His gospel.

Christian rulers, then, imply and require Christian counsellors of State, unless they would be guilty of open sin and folly. What concord hath Christ with Belial, or what fellowship hath he that believeth with an infidel? Advice, to be tendered and received with real benefit, demands plainly some sympathy in feeling and judgment. But the inference may be carried further. The choice and appointment of rulers in the Christian Church ought usually to depend on their supposed eminence in knowledge and wisdom. The precise form of selection matters little to the present argument. But some conviction of superior wisdom is the natural ground of such appointments, when the vital power of the Church has not died away. Such cases do not affect our reasoning. Our

object is to learn the relations which exist, when the life and reality of both ordinances, ecclesiastical and civil rule, is fairly maintained, and there is some approach, both in Church and State, to the true ideal. In this case the chief ministers of the Church will be, with partial exceptions, those whom Christians account the worthiest, for their powers of mind, practical experience, moral uprightness, and spiritual wisdom, to feed the people of Christ with knowledge and understanding. Their office is to be prophets, pastors, and teachers to their fellow-Christians, and there are promises of special help from above, to those who are faithful and upright, to qualify them for so weighty a charge. Their duty is not to fill up a routine of idle ceremonies, but to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord, to teach and premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family, and to bring them to that state in which 'no place may be left, either for error in doctrine, or for viciousness in life.'

Now whenever Christ's ordinance has not been made wholly void, through the intrusion of wolves and hirelings, of a Christian clergy grievously ignorant, or grossly immoral and profane, where should the Ruler naturally look for some of his best and wisest counsellors, but to those who have been singled out already for their supposed eminence in genuine piety and true wisdom? Some, perhaps, may be grievously unfit for their sacred office, and therefore still more unfit to be wise counsellors to their king. Others may be so occupied with their special charge, or so busied with teaching the first letters of the oracles of God, that they are unfit for any task which requires a

wide insight into human nature, the wants of the people, and the whole harmony of God's revealed will. Yet still here, if anywhere, the Ruler may expect to find some counsellors endued with those forms of spiritual wisdom, which may render them the best, the most serious, and the most upright and judicious, in advising on the main interests of the kingdom and people over whom he rules. They will be more likely than most others to discern the moral turning-point, where industry degenerates into worldliness and sinful neglect of man's nobler being; where rights of property become the selfish abuse of a sacred trust; and where the pursuit of national honour, lawful in itself, sinks into ambitious pride, oversteps the bounds of justice and equity, nurses military violence, and thus becomes a dangerous offence against the commands of God, and the peace of mankind.

These conclusions may be denied, and the denial justified by a plausible appeal to the facts of history. But this can only be when the double limitation is forgotten, which results from the principle itself, and the actual state of the Church of Christ. If the king be a mere devotee, and the priests are only the active patrons of superstition; or the king a worldly and ambitious conqueror, and his ecclesiastics flatterers and parasites, the effects must needs be deplorable. Even in happier times there are self-evident reasons why an exclusive or excessive resort to bishops and clergy for State counsellors must be injurious. Wherever the Church is confounded with the clergy, it is certain that the clergy will be superstitious, and the laity worldly and profane. Two things are always needful in the counsels of the State, right and

sound principles to form the basis of the national policy, and a prudent choice of means, such as can only result from large and various experience of human affairs. The clergy, in a healthy state of the Church, will be best qualified to supply the former element, but in the other they will often be very inferior to laymen. The final conclusion, then, may be given in this guarded form. A Christian monarch, who would be faithful to his trust, must seek his counsellors entirely, or almost entirely, among his fellow-Christians. Whenever the Church is in a healthy state, he will also look to the wisest of its pastors for especial guidance in all the main principles and outlines of the national policy; while he will be careful to use the larger practical experience of the wisest Christian laymen, in all questions which require the application of these principles to the ever-varying complication of human affairs.

Here, then, is implied a further stage in the direct union of Church and State. For the great distinction of a constitutional monarchy, or free state, is that the main laws of public duty are not left to the secret and accidental working of the royal conscience, but are turned into a public compact, and made the subject of covenants, oaths, and promises, before God and the people. The fit terms and conditions of such a compact must depend on the question, what laws of royal duty are most vital to the welfare of the nation. One of the chief is plainly the choice of wise and upright counsellors, and the rejection of those who are wicked or foolish. No covenant can secure this object entirely, without leaving room for partial failure. But it is one step towards its attain-

ment, when faith in the word of God, and reverence for His name, are counted main requisites in those who guide the national councils. Popular election or local representation may secure, though imperfectly, the element of practical experience, and intimate knowledge of the wants of the people. But the Christian ministry, represented by some of its leading pastors and teachers, is the natural home for that clearness of vision in the grand moral outlines of national duty, which was given largely to seers and prophets in the days of old. The constitution does wisely to include a popular element, that it may ensure practical acquaintance with the wants and feelings of the people in the public counsels. But it does no less wisely to include a pastoral, episcopal, or ecclesiastical element, that it may secure the benefit of high religious principles, and its legislature and executive may be leavened with the principles of Christian faith and wisdom. The means, in either case, may fail to secure the desired object, but they are wise and reasonable in themselves. When this balance is lost, and numbers and multitudes are made supreme in the choice of legislators and advisers of the crown, while all recognition of the pastors of the Church, in those counsels, is set aside, there expediency is triumphant, and principle is despised. It then becomes plain that Mammon has a firmer hold on the heart of the nation than the truth of Christ, the voice of conscience, and the will of God.

Another duty of the Ruler, when he becomes a Christian, is open and avowed sympathy with the progress of the Gospel in the world, and the cause and claims of Christian truth. If sincere in his faith, a new world is



opened before him. He has learned the great truth that Christ has died for all, that they who live should not live to themselves, but to Him who died for them, and rose again. He knows that all earthly things are vanity and vexation of spirit, unless they minister to the great design of Providence, the moral redemption and spiritual elevation of the souls of men. Kingly power itself will be seen to be a worthless bauble, an empty show, unless it contributes to this great work of Divine love. To pursue the things of this life for their own sake, apart from the nobler ends of our being, he will see to be wretched idolatry, a kind of moral suicide. In every thought, word, and act, he will see it his duty and privilege to seek the honour of Christ, and to help forward that work of mercy, which has its foundation in the sacrifice of His cross, and is to find its completion in the promised triumphs of the kingdom of God.

Such a Ruler must have a large sympathy with the Church of Christ in all its works of Christian benevolence. He will gladly seize every occasion to give help and honour to those who are occupied in them, as benefactors of the people among whom they labour, and of all mankind. Now this is really, in the deepest sense of the words, a civil patronage of the Church of Christ. For the Ruler is appointed for the punishment of evil-doers, but his higher and nobler duty is the praise of them that do well. And here the very nature of good and evil introduces a further contrast. Evil is base and sordid, and ill-doers will usually care less for censure than for punishment. But of real goodness the reverse is true. The Christian, as he rises in the scale of moral excellence,

will care less for external rewards, compared with the approbation of those who bestow them. The strokes of justice are more needful than mere censure; but the praise of the ruler may often have a mightier influence, to encourage well-doers, than all the outward rewards or honours which their conduct may secure. The noblest element of royal patronage is not patents of nobility and titles of honour, much less gifts of money; but the generous tribute of hearty praise and approval, rendered, with willing lips, to the faithful servants of Christ and His Church, by those whom God has exalted to the seats of power, and who sit on thrones of judgment.

‘In the light of the king’s countenance is life, and his favour is a cloud of the latter rain.’ It is not gifts, honours, and titles, but the favour itself, which is here made the chief encouragement of real virtue. Where this is wanting, gifts are mere bribes, and honours are only worthless flatteries. This is the highest form of royal patronage, and gives the others their only solid and real value. This is to generous hearts like a refreshing shower of the latter rain, which gives them new life, and stirs them to fresh activities of love, that the whole nation, in due season, may reap a more abundant harvest of righteousness. And this favour, the highest gift which rulers can bestow, the Church of Christ may justly claim from every upright prince or monarch, unless it has become faithless to its own trust. To be neutral here is to be senseless and ungrateful; senseless to the true dignity of man, and the proper object of his being; and ungrateful for all those benefits of peace, union, and happiness, which genuine faith and piety must ever bring

in their train. In what forms this royal favour can be safely and wisely displayed, is a subject for further inquiry, but the main duty itself is clear. The description in the proverb ought to be fulfilled, and the cloud of royal favour must come down, in refreshing showers, to water all the most fruitful and lovely plants in the vineyard of the Lord.

The theory of State neutrality would condemn all faithful Christians to labour beneath a cold and wintry sky of indifference and neglect, where no sweet influences are to alight on their toilsome husbandry. And certainly, in the moral world, as in the natural, the seedtime is often followed, not without benefit, by wintry frosts, and sometimes by storms and tempests. But still it is not under such a sky that we can look for the richest and largest harvests of spiritual blessing. It is when the favour of the king is a cloud of the latter rain, and a smile of public approval rests on all efforts of wise and Christian benevolence, that the pastures of the wilderness rejoice, and the valleys are clothed with corn, till they laugh and sing. When the kings of Tarshish and the isles bring presents to the Lord, and the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts, and all kings fall down before Emmanuel, the Church receives her fullest harvest, and the handful of corn on the top of the mountains unfolds itself into the stately glory of the cedars of Lebanon. The clouds of the latter rain in Solomon's parable pour out their treasures, and the promise is fulfilled: — 'Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall give us His blessing.'

## CHAPTER II.

## THE LEGAL ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH.

THE visible Church of Christ is no abstraction, which rulers can easily pass by in silent neglect. It is a society with laws and constitutions of its own, which must have a mighty influence on the conduct of its members. It has places and times of public worship, sacred buildings, an orderly government, its consecrated gifts, and spiritual jurisdiction. There is scarcely one function of civil government, which must not be interfered with and modified by its presence. Its sacred offerings may absorb a large share of the national revenues. The voice of its rulers, enforced by spiritual censures, may supersede the jurisdiction of the magistrate, by exercising a mightier and more effectual power over the conscience of all its members. Its assemblies for worship may infringe laws enacted to prevent lawless and tumultuous gatherings of the people. Its attempts to proselyte, either through the sinful rashness of its members, or the passions of its adversaries, may endanger the peace of society. The nation may be weakened by the bitterness of religious strife, till it falls an easy prey to foreign enemies. Parents may appeal to the civil power against their own

children, who renounce their creed, and refuse to obey their commands in matters of religious faith. Citizens may refuse oaths profanely or lightly imposed, and Christian soldiers may refuse to burn incense on the altars of heathenish idolatry. A priesthood, strong in the fears of a superstitious people, may abuse their influence, and impose a humiliating yoke on the governors of the land. In one way or another, rulers will be compelled to take some cognizance of this mighty power. They must either pronounce it a criminal association, dangerous to the State; or discourage it as a troublesome and uncertain rival; or else cherish it with friendly and wise patronage, varying, from the simple admission of its lawfulness and social utility, to its full establishment among the settled institutions of the realm, and a hearty co-operation in its great work of Christian faith and love.

The first course is that of persecuting heathen emperors, and is impossible in the case of a Christian monarch. Himself a servant of Christ, he will count it the sin of Amalek to assail the ordinance of his Master and Lord, and to raise his hand against the throne of God. He will not even dare to act the part of Julian, or strive to discourage and weaken it as a dangerous rival. He will see in it a Divine institution, which claims his deepest honour; and if he abstains from more direct support, it will only be through the fear of laying a rash and profane hand, like Uzzah, on the ark of 'its magnificent and sacred cause.' The last course, in some one of its many varieties, alone is open to him. He must give public sanction to the Church, pronounce its objects to be lawful, nay, supremely excellent, and own that it possesses, within its



own proper sphere, a Divine authority, which no one can set aside or despise without manifest sin.

This legal sanction, however, on the part of the civil ruler, may exist in various degrees. Let us view it with reference to Christian assemblies, sacred property, ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and the instruction of the people in religious truth.

I. What is the Ruler's duty with regard to the Religious Assemblies of the Church? Must he simply overlook their existence? This will seldom be in his power. The peace of society will usually require some laws against seditious assemblies. But such laws are nugatory, if all religious meetings of every kind are exempt from the notice of the ruler. Some test will be needed, that sedition and other crimes may not be cloaked under the mask of religion. This cannot be done aright, when the Ruler has no knowledge of religious truth. In no age of the world have politics and religion ever been practically independent. When a false religion is established, the spread of Divine truth must tend to change and imperil the actual constitution. Where true religion is established, the doctrine which denounces all establishments must equally tend to political change. Religious worship may then pass, by insensible steps, into a political agitation and crusade. Again, when the State is wholly irreligious, the doctrine of Christ will condemn the indifference of Pilates and Gallios, and will equally tend to reverse the existing constitution. It is folly to suppose that the name of religion is any safeguard against assemblies, that will excite the passions, and endanger the public peace. Rulers must either learn to discriminate, or

abdicate their trust. They must ascertain whether these assemblies are dangerous, directly or indirectly, to the State; whether religion is the pretext, or the honest aim, of those who come together; and even in the latter case, whether there is any serious intermixture of doctrines and exhortations that would undermine the foundations of the national polity, and justify and demand some restraint in the interests of the public peace.

Religious toleration, we sometimes hear it said by noisy and superficial talkers, is a daring insult on the part of rulers. But this outcry is a secret testimony, by those who make it, to that principle of national religion, which they loudly condemn. For what is the reason of their dislike to the term? It seems degrading to religion, the noblest privilege and highest duty of man, that it should exist merely on sufferance, or that rulers should say to their subjects: We give you our license to worship God, and graciously resolve to inflict no punishment on your acts of worship. The censure has a partial truth. But must everything which calls itself religion be therefore screened from the eye of the magistrate? Is he presumptuous when he inquires whether so-called religion be religion indeed, or sedition in disguise? If the people are taught in their houses of worship, that no allegiance is due to a heretic sovereign, is such teaching, the best nursery of treason, to be exempt from all control? If teachers have no fixed creed, no standard of faith, how can the ruler know what anti-social maxims may form the staple of their teaching? There are fifty doctrines, dangerous to the peace of nations, which proud prelates or fiery fanatics have professed to derive from the word of

God, or else from some private revelations of their own. In all these cases is toleration an insult? Must the mere name of religion, like the flag which pirates borrow, exclude all right of search, in order to learn the true nature of the teaching which passes under a sacred name? No thoughtful Christian will set up so wild a claim. No ruler or statesman, who has any fear of God, or love of his country, or care for his own reputation, will listen to it for a single moment. Some discrimination is absolutely required. Things may shelter themselves under the name of religion, which a wise statesman will not even tolerate, but place them under just and needful restraint. In contrast with these, all other assemblies are tolerated; and if the duty of the ruler stops here, toleration is the only term which expresses their true position. He decides that they are not so hurtful, if hurtful, as to require prohibition, and here his commission ends.

Such a bare tolerance of religious sects, however, has been loudly denounced, and the cry has found some response in the conscience of many Christians. But what does this really prove? If assemblies pernicious to the State justly demand open censure and restraint from the Civil Ruler, those which promote true religion and Christian morality deserve more than simple toleration. They have a national claim to some honour, if not to direct support and patronage, from the magistracy of the land. Toleration, in these cases, has a cold and heartless sound. Such worship, instead of a bare permission, coldly and cautiously vouchsafed, calls rather for approbation and royal favour. Thus the duty of a public recognition and patronage of the Church is confirmed by the instincts of

conscience, even in those who argue stoutly against it. Toleration is too much for seditious assemblies, and hotbeds of treason or immorality, cloaked under the name of religion; but the heart of the Christian tells him that it is too little for the worship of God, sincerely offered in the name of Christ, in spirit and in truth. The Ruler is thus bound to make a threefold distinction. Some doctrines and assemblies, which veil themselves under the name of religion, may be intolerably mischievous; others may be tolerable, and free from such evil as to justify active repression; while the true worship of God, such as He has commanded and approved, must be worthy of more than toleration—of sympathy, honour, and reverence—from those rulers who are the appointed servants of the Most High.

Those who denounce and condemn toleration must therefore claim an unbounded license for sedition, or else admit the propriety of civil patronage and countenance of true religion. The difference between their views, and those which they condemn, will not rest on the degree of favour to be shewn to religion, but on the ground of that favour, and the width to which it should extend. In one case a creed or church is to be patronised, because it is acceptable to God and profitable to men; in the other, simply because it exists. The duty of the State, in one hypothesis, is to promote the diffusion of wholesome truth; in the other, to secure all existing creeds from proselytism and disturbance. One ideal is the universal prevalence of pure and undefiled religion; the other, the stillness and apathy of spiritual death, where a hundred opinions slumber side by side in

their tombs of ice, without invading each other's graveyard. Public censures, in one case, will be aimed against blasphemers that affront and defy the God of glory, or foul superstitions which debase the souls of men; in the other, against that zeal for truth, which disturbs the peaceful slumber of contented worldliness. Still in either case, if bare toleration is disclaimed, a real patronage is implied. The Ruler will then declare, of every creed and worship whatever, that it is acceptable to God and profitable to men, that its assemblies are wholly free from his oversight, and that he has as little ground for fear, or right to guard against social evils, as if they were the hallelujahs of angels in the courts of heaven.

The real duty of the Christian Ruler, in a world where evil abounds, is very different. There may be blasphemous or gross superstitions, so hateful to God and injurious to men, that he ought to punish them as public crimes; or if less aggravated, to discountenance them by gentler means, as moral nuisances in the State. There may be other cases, in which serious evils are mixed with so much of conscientious feeling, and are so free from direct and palpable mischief, that it is a duty to tolerate them, though not commended or approved. But the worship of the Church of Christ, which its Lord has himself ordained, and in which the Christian Ruler is bound to share, demands more than simple toleration. He will count it the highest function of the State, that it is a nursery for such assemblies of holy worship. He will desire that all the honour and glory of his kingdom may enter within the gates of this spiritual Jerusalem; and that society, with its arts and sciences and various fields



of thought, may be like the outer court to this temple of God. He will consecrate all his influence to the great purpose for which all things were first created, and states and kingdoms have been ordained; and thus rise nearer and nearer to the standard of the principalities and powers in heavenly places, who learn, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God.

II. The Property of the Church is a second point of unavoidable contact with the civil power. Experience proves how large the offerings of religious zeal may become, and how great a share of the national wealth may thus, in course of time, be placed at the disposal of the Christian priesthood. What course must an upright ruler here pursue? Rights of property are not so absolute as to allow no restriction from regard to the public welfare. The right of bequest, in the eye of sound reason, is still more limited. Why should a dying person — perhaps with his faculties impaired, and with a terrified conscience — decide the fate of property for centuries to come, and the rulers be entirely forbidden to interfere? It may be expedient to give a wide range to the choice, or even the caprice, of the testator, that industry may have a fuller reward, and the risk of public malversation be diminished. But in times of war or famine, and when wealth is grossly abused to the injury of thousands, cautious statesmen may think it wise to interfere, and to impose restrictions, or prescribe duties, to lessen the evil. These maxims apply still more to the bequests of the dying. The State is bound to decide what objects are lawful, and what unlawful, in such bequests, and even

among lawful objects, to encourage some, in preference to others less desirable.

The Christian Ruler must here be brought into contact, possibly into collision, with ecclesiastical authorities. If all bequests to the Church or its ministers are forbidden, the service of God receives an open dishonour; and dying men are forbidden to acknowledge the claims of His word, or to help on the progress of His gospel, even at the hour when they resign their stewardship into His hands. Again, if every kind of religious bequest is made lawful, the State will practically assume the office of a guardian, to perpetuate error, and to secure the continuance of hurtful superstitions to the end of time. Before he can accept such a task, this Ruler must cease to be a disciple of Christ, and become a virtual ally of the powers of darkness.

A similar difficulty will arise, when the property consigned to priestly hands for religious uses becomes excessive in amount, so as to produce disorder and confusion, instead of the healthy development of national industry. A more delicate task may then devolve upon the king or statesman. He will have need to correct the false notions of duty, which lead men to the misdirection of their wealth, and so to limit the bequests of the people, or to control their application, that they may not minister to the pride or sloth of a careless priesthood, but diffuse themselves in works of wisdom and charity through the land. Filial piety must be preferred to the Corbans of superstition, and kindness to the poor and needy be treated as more acceptable to God than the squandering

of treasure on the outward decoration of temples, or the luxury and ambition of the priesthood. The Ruler, who would govern aright, must thus be able to discern the true laws of Christian duty in the service of God. He must see clearly the excellence of holy worship, the claims of the Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, on the wealth and riches of nations, and the open honour due to His holy name. But he must also check the abuses of mere superstition, and teach his subjects, by the laws they have to obey, that mercy is better than sacrifice, and that the wise and upright discharge of social duties is one of the most grateful offerings to the King of Heaven.

A legal recognition of the Church of Christ is thus inevitable, unless the Christian Ruler is wholly unfaithful to his trust. If every offering and bequest is sanctioned, without reference to its nature, he becomes a menial servant, to register the follies, and perpetuate the caprices and delusions, of every dying man, and must sacrifice to these both the honour of God and the welfare of the nation. He must learn to discriminate, or cease to rule. If he discriminates wisely, he will encourage offerings given to the Church of Christ to promote the knowledge of Divine truth, and the spread of Christian morality, truth, and righteousness. He will equally restrain those offerings, or revise their application, which clash with social duties, involve false and superstitious views of God's character, and encourage the pride or indolence of the clergy, instead of promoting works of real charity to the bodies and souls of men. The Church will thus be owned as a Divine institution, its objects commended and approved, and the zeal and liberality of its members encour-

aged, but a power of wise and salutary control be carefully maintained. Not jealous rivalry, or proud and suspicious independence, but friendly union, joined with watchful oversight, of the State, and faithful testimony to truth on the part of the Church, is the only true and fitting relation between these two powers equally ordained of God.

III. Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction is a third subject, which involves the need of some legal establishment of the Church by the Civil Power. Various questions must arise with regard to sacred buildings and revenues, which require that the Ruler should decide on the reality and extent of this jurisdiction. Is every part of the Visible Church free to act independently of the rest? May the buildings and revenues, held by any part, be alienated from the general body, whenever feuds may arise? In what cases are the claims of Church Rulers valid and just, and when are they oppressive and unrighteous? Who may rightly claim to be the ministers of the Church? Which of rival candidates have a right to the use of particular buildings, or to the possession of Church revenues? In times of strife and schism, what constitutes the Church, the vote of a majority of the baptized, or the worshippers, or the communicants, the retention of the same creed, submission to one central authority, a special form of government, or the decision of local and national rulers? If bequests are made to separate congregations, is sameness of place, successive election of trustees, or sameness of doctrine, essential to a legal claim? In cases of partial duration, what change vitiates a title, or leaves it unimpaired? If property is bequeathed to the Church of Christ without further definition, when may a National Church claim the

bequest as its own? If left to a National Church, does sameness of doctrine, or the mere fact of some corporation, religious or secular, being still established, constitute a just claim to possession? If bequeathed for some special religious purpose, is the will of the testator binding of itself, or does it need the sanction of ecclesiastical authority, or of the civil magistrate? All these questions, and many others, must arise. The Ruler must resign his people to anarchy, or attempt the decision. But how shall he decide justly? He cannot, unless, first of all, he admits the fact that the Church of Christ is a lawful and a mighty institution in the midst of the land, of the first importance for good or evil. He cannot, unless he further owns its Divine origin, and learns the will of Christ with regard to the nature of its communion, the relation of its parts, and the extent and limit of just authority in Church rulers. If it be the will of Christ that every congregation should be wholly independent of the rest, the Ruler must decide accordingly, and admit the separate claim of each congregation, in cases of dispute, to its own revenues and house of prayer. The claim of joint authority, either by a bishop, a synod, or a parliament, would then be a sinful usurpation. Again, if the Visible Church is defined by its obedience to the decisions of one infallible head, the living successor of the Apostles, every part which renounces this authority must lose its moral claim to property originally devoted to the Catholic Church. But, if the essence of the Church consists in sound doctrine, and a public ministry who agree in laws of mutual jurisdiction, those who renounce the doctrine they once professed, or disclaim the jurisdiction they once owned, must forfeit



their claim to revenues or buildings received and held in trust on these conditions alone. These questions carry us into the heart of all the main controversies which have troubled and divided the Church for many generations. And yet, until they are answered, the Ruler is incapable of forming a just decision. He will have to pronounce sentence in the dark; and will be almost sure to offend grievously, either against the rights of Christian congregations, and the laws of Christian liberty, or against the prerogatives of just authority, and the honour and sacredness of the revealed word and truth of God.

It is now plain what is the only ground on which the Christian Ruler, dealing with grave questions of Church property and religious bequests, can possibly attain to a just and wise decision. That ground is not ignorance, nor indifference, nor a blind neutrality, but a discernment of the truth and will of God. He must see things as they really are, and judge them by the standard of what they really ought to be. The Church Visible exists in his kingdom, and comes into contact at a thousand points with its social system. He must endeavour to look on it as his Lord looks upon it, to define it as the Word of God defines it, and honour it as its real character demands. He must, in times of strife and division, seek to discriminate rival claims as justice and Scripture truth require; or else he must renounce his office, and become the tool of superstitious tyranny and priestcraft, or the accomplice and slave of popular ignorance and self-will. If the Visible Church be an ordinance of Christ, he may not, without sin, shut his eyes to the fact, or refuse to own and honour the appointment of His heavenly Master. If its essence be a definite creed, or the

profession of certain great truths and doctrines, then he must so define it, and deny the claim of those who renounce its creed to share in the corporate privileges of the Church, or the bequests of its members in former days. If Christ has appointed an infallible deputy, and defined His Church by obedience to the bishop of one see, the Ruler must bow to the voice of her Lord, and refuse the funds of the Church to those who renounce the proper tenure on which they depend. If this claim is a mere invention of ambitious pride, he must refuse subjection to it for a single hour, and maintain the just rights of those parts of the Church, which obey the voice of their Lord, and reject the usurpations of man. And thus the Christian Ruler, whether king, prince, senate, or parliament, unless he would resign the most vital questions to blind chance, and the strife of religious factions, must recognise the Church in its true character, maintain its just rights, distinguish them, in the light of sound doctrine, from counterfeit claims; and thus link the State, by acts of wise discernment and Christian equity, with the perpetual ordinance of that Divine Lord, who is at once the King of nations, and the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls.

IV. The Missionary Labours of the Church, and its efforts to spread the Gospel, are a fourth aspect in which there is needed some legal recognition by the rulers of the State.

The course of true religion has ever been a warfare, attended with opposition and danger. The faithful preaching of the Gospel, with its warnings to sinners, and the promises and threatenings of the Word of God, will often stir up hatred, and expose the witnesses of Christ to

ill-will, passion, and violence. Conflicts may and will arise, that call for the action of the civil power. On what principles is the Ruler to interfere? He has to reconcile, if possible, the peace of society with the rights of conscience, and the claims of God's eternal truth. Either one of these alone will be sought, to the neglect of the others, or all of them in due subordination. In the former case very serious evils must arise, while the latter involves a legal recognition and national establishment of the truth of God.

And, first, the Ruler may adopt the maxim of religious neutrality in its secular form, as it commends itself to the eyes of mere statesmen. He will set aside all extreme views of the sacredness of conscience, which profess to be drawn from the Bible, and reduce its claims within narrower bounds. His aim will be to secure public peace, and no religious plea will keep him from interfering where this is in danger. But wherever there are zealous efforts to proselytize from one faith to another, this danger may arise. The deepest feelings of the heart may be wounded, the most beloved superstitions be rudely exposed, or the most sacred truths daringly assailed, and thus passions may be kindled into rage, and tumult and violence spread through a land once quiet and peaceful. Whom, in this case, will the ruler condemn? The first aggressor; not him who first raises the hand of violence, but him whose mischievous zeal has aroused the passions, that slumbered in ten thousand hearts. If all religious creeds and forms are matters of indifference, all proselytism must be a criminal, causeless disturbance of the peace of society. But, on the neutral theory, the Ruler is forbidden

to own the superior claim of one creed above another. Such distinctions on his part are pronounced in these days, even by many religious men, to be an insult and a wrong. He cannot, in the same breath, renounce and retain the right of discrimination. He cannot sweep away all national faith, and abolish all ascendancy of truth over error, because politics have nothing to do with religion, and then make the worth of any doctrine a full excuse for aggressions, which plainly occasion popular violence, or social strife and confusion. To plead the rights of conscience is equally untenable. If peace, apart from truth, is to be his sole aim, the only right of conscience is that a man may believe in secret what he pleases. If he claims, further, a right to disturb and assault the convictions of others, the magistrate must annul the claim, and give a juster decision. What, then, must be the certain and logical result of the secular form of neutrality, in a world where superstition and religious error still abound? A peaceful pantheon of harmonious falsehoods, the torpor and apathy of contented worldliness and spiritual death.

But the Ruler may surrender his own instincts, and interpret the maxim of neutrality according to the views of its theological disciples. His first principle will now be the absolute supremacy of private conscience in all matters of religion. All religious truth must be disowned in the national policy, except this one supposed truth, the sacredness of conscience in every jot and title of its claims. Free license, then, must be given to every form of religion, true or false, real or pretended, to proselyte without restraint. Religious conscience, like privilege of Parliament, is to be a bar to all law; and

theft and murder excepted, every man must be suffered to do what is right in his own eyes, when he pleads the name of conscience and religion.

Such a course may be possible for a moment in times of decaying faith, when no creed is held very firmly, and the wheels of society may still move on as before. A host of rival creeds, none of them held with earnestness, may create a very slight ruffle on the surface, and the depths of quiet worldliness and ungodliness remain unmoved below. But in ages either of zealous superstition, or of lively and earnest faith, such a policy will soon loose every passion, and desolate the land. The blind fury of contending partizans, whom the law does not even attempt to restrain, will make law itself a mockery, and the public magistrates will be only idle and helpless spectators of national misery and confusion. These are not imaginary evils, but confirmed by sad experience, and many painful examples, from the times of Cyril almost to the present day.

The evils are no less real, and perhaps more lasting, when peace and conscience are slighted in supposed deference to the claims of religious truth. The religious zealotry of rulers has too often been the curse of nations. Truth itself is calm, wise, gentle, and forbearing; but its counterfeits are harsh, arrogant, reckless, and headstrong. It is easy, then, to understand, how often the sacred name of truth may be pleaded by honest bigots, to justify a course oppressive to the just rights of conscience, and fatal to the peace of society.

How then, amidst these rocks and quicksands, can the Ruler steer his course aright? He must endeavour to



reconcile the claims of social peace, private conscience, and eternal truth, assigning each its due place in harmony with the others. He must subordinate peace to conscience, and conscience to the supreme authority of truth; while still the debt of love we owe to society, and the rights of conscience, are one part of truth itself, inseparable from the rest. Not even to avoid the risk of strife may he deprive Christians of their just right to confess the truth openly with their lips, as well as to receive it into their heart. Not even by the plea of conscience must he suffer the authority of God's truth to be set aside, or lend his favourable countenance to the diffusion of corrupt doctrines, idolatrous rites, and poisonous errors. He must aim to see every object in its right place, and in its true light. Peace is highly important, and uprightness and sincerity are still more to be prized. But of all things the highest and most important is the word and truth of the living God, the only source of solid and lasting peace, the standard to which every conscience ought to bow with submission and reverence.

These remarks have a direct application to the missionary labours of the Church of Christ. For its commission binds it to proselyte others to the faith, and to reprove and expose every form of superstition and unbelief. In its discharge of this great duty the peace of society may often be exposed to some danger. The magistrate may not sacrifice conscience to his desire for peace, nor forbid Christians to obey the commands of Christ, because evil passions may thus be roused into fierce activity. Such issues they are led to expect, and are charged, in the full prospect of them, to persevere in

their noble task. But neither will conscience be a sufficient warrant, unless enlightened by Divine truth. Saul verily thought it his duty to persecute the Church; but this could not justify a wise ruler in giving free scope to his persecuting zeal. When the social peace is threatened by active proselytism, the Ruler must have some firm and solid ground for his countenance of such efforts. And this can only rest on the conviction that the message, which encounters opposition, is acceptable to God and profitable to mankind. When social peace is disturbed by the dissemination of unholy rites or mischievous falsehoods, no sincerity on the part of the aggressors can justify the magistrate who abets their cause, and fails, in some way or other, to discountenance a serious evil.

The Church, then, in its missionary labours, has a solid claim on the support and friendship of Christian Rulers. The work which employs it is obedience to a Divine command, and becomes the chief source, where it prospers, of every social blessing. Godliness has promise of the life that now is, as well as of the life to come. The Ruler must be blind, who does not treat the message and its messengers with honour, for their Lord's sake. He can never shield them from the malice and passion of evil men, unless he sees a worth and fruitfulness in their object, which far outweighs the risk of transient evils, arising from the wilfulness and ignorance of those who the light they hate and despise. But this can be true only when the Church is faithful to its Lord, and truth, not error, pure worship, and not idolatry, spiritual religion, and not histrionic follies, are the substance of the message her ministers convey through the land. The

Ruler lies thus under a triple obligation. It is due to the peace of society that he should forbid the spread of revolting blasphemies, and all that is needlessly irritating and offensive, even in those efforts to proselyte, which may be tolerable or praiseworthy in themselves. It is due to conscience that space should be given for the honest growth of conviction, that no inquisition be made into the secret thoughts of men, and that the profession even of erroneous opinions, if not arrogant and ostentatious, and unless they strike openly at the authority of God and the laws of man, should be freely allowed, because sincerity is the only soil in which truth can flourish. But it is also due to the honour of Divine truth, that the Ruler shall not degrade it to a level with every superstitious error or blasphemous delusion; that he shall not forbear to encourage the Church's obedience to a Divine command, under the vain plea that the active diffusion of mischievous falsehood has just the same claim to his patronage and favour; that he shall not put Christ and Antichrist on the same level, or give the holy name of justice to sottish blindness of the conscience and heart, when it refuses to own any difference of worth between truths which ennoble and purify, and falsehoods which debase, enslave, and ruin the souls of men.

The faithful Ruler is thus bound to give a legal sanction and countenance to the missionary labours of the Church of Christ. He will never lend her bribes for dishonest and mercenary followers, nor racks and tortures for contumacious despisers of her message. But he will own her work to be good and right, pleasing to God, and wholesome to the State, and not suffer it to be hind-

ered by the blind passions of ignorant and misguided men. He will recognise the local claims of every congregation, reclaimed by her ministry from heathenism, idolatry, or brutish ignorance, to the knowledge of Christ. As a king of righteousness, he will bless her ministers, when they return from each successful inroad on the kingdom of popular ignorance and heathen darkness. Every house of God, which rises amidst the moral waste, devoted to pure worship and sound doctrines, will receive his sanction, be placed under the special guardianship of the law against insult and violence, and its ministry will receive due honour among the benefactors of the State. All due help will be given to those who labour in God's vineyard, that the ground, once reclaimed may never be overgrown with ignorance or superstition, but continue to be a field which the Lord may bless with His approving smile. In a nation so favoured, where the Church is faithful to the truth of her heavenly message, and the Rulers of the State have not put out the eyes of their soul, and turned themselves into moles and bats in the name of justice and religious equality, the words of the liturgy will indeed be fulfilled, and peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, be established among them for all generations.

But the same subject may be further viewed in its connexion with Sacred Times, Places, and Persons, and that great ordinance of Marriage, which lies at the basis of all social order.

V. THE LORD'S-DAY, and its due observance, is one peculiar ordinance of the Church of Christ. Like the Jewish Sabbath, to which it succeeds, this day of sacred

rest, under the Gospel, is a public sign to Christians that their risen and ascended Lord has set them apart to Himself for a peculiar people. Wherever this ordinance is recognised by the laws, and embodied in the constitution, national Christianity has not entirely died away. Where its observance is blotted out, the nation has lapsed into heathenism once more.

The true Christian will honour this ordinance of God. He will ‘remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.’ Since the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath, and has hallowed to Himself the first day of the week by His own resurrection, and by claiming it for His own in His parting message to the Churches, he will tread in the steps of the inspired Apostles, and of the early Church, and feel that it is a day of gladness which the Lord has made. Whatever the example of others, he will refrain from the common business of life, and spend its hours in private devotion, domestic rest, and public worship, that he and his household may be prepared for the better Sabbath of the life to come.

The Christian Ruler, who has joined the Church, and believes in the resurrection, will not shrink from the same duty. He will lay aside on that day the cares of state, and seek to refresh his spirit by acts of worship, and public and private communion with God. There will be no councils of state, no courts of justice, no legislative assemblies, no royal festivities, on that day which our risen Lord and Saviour claims for His own. He will thus set a public example of obedience to the will of Christ, and honour that sacred day which embalms and



renews the memory of God's greatest mercy to our sinful world.

But the Ruler ought not only to be an example to the people, but also a maintainer of the laws of God in their application to the welfare of the State. It is the duty of all men, who hear the Gospel, to receive and obey it. It is the duty of every Christian to honour the Lord's day, the Christian Sabbath. All Sabbath-breaking, even under the Gospel, is a sin. It is not a secret sin, but one which has the widest social consequences. It interferes with and disturbs the peaceful worship of God. It lays a fearful temptation on the poor to sin against their own conscience, and ruin their souls, by complying with the wishes of worldly employers, and of those who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. It breeds a habit of feverish care and unremitting worldliness, or else of idle self-indulgence, opposed to the law of man's creation, and to the stewardship which every Christian holds from his Creator. Wherever the Gospel has been preached through the land, and gathered multitudes of worshippers, one alternative alone is left to the Ruler. He must either subject the faithful members of the Church to heavy loss and trouble in obeying Christ, by a free license for Sabbath-breaking throughout the land ; or else restrain public dealings of trade and resorts of worldly pleasure on the Lord's-day, and thus consecrate the nation visibly to the service of Christ, by placing the Church's weekly Sabbath among the institutions of the land.

In the fulfilment of this duty, delicate and perplexing questions will arise. But these are only the tests which

Christian sincerity must undergo in every field of action. The Lord of the Sabbath, by the nature of the Christian festival, calls His people to a more spiritual service than in the days of old ; and also, by His own example, has relaxed the ceremonial rigour of the Jewish Sabbath, and infused new elements of grace, liberty, and joy. The Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. The rigour of legal penalties may be foreign from the tone of the Gospel ; but open neglect and indifference is still more opposed to the whole teaching of Scripture, from Paradise to the judgment-day. The main duties of the Ruler, however, in respect of the Christian Sabbath, are simple and plain. He will honour it, privately and officially, in his own conduct, and will abstain from worldly business or affairs of state, unless in those rare occasions of pressing calamity or urgent danger, which come within the scope of our Lord's approval that an ox or an ass may be drawn from a pit even on the Sabbath-day. He ought, next, to prohibit those acts of Sabbath-breaking, which interfere with the public worship of God, and render it impossible for any class of servants of the State, and difficult and unsafe for private Christians. He will refuse a legal sanction to acts of business and commercial agreements on that day, lest the magistracy should thus become active partakers in the sins of the people. When the general conscience has been trained, by the teaching of the Church, to own the authority of the Christian Sabbath, he will forbid the exercise of all worldly business on that day, with such exceptions alone as are warranted by the spirit of the Gospel of Christ. On the other hand, whatever can reconcile the enjoyment

of God's works of creation with the duties of public worship, and place the rich and poor on a footing of equal privilege in their Maker's presence, is a fit object for the Ruler's care, and agrees well with the purpose of this holy day. Its intended features are the freedom and joy of the resurrection. Restrictions are needful, but only as the fence around a glorious privilege, like a wall of fire around a Christian people, to shield them from the seductions of a debasing and all-engrossing worldliness, that glory may dwell in the midst of the land.

VI. Another branch of the same duty relates to the Places set apart for holy worship. The law of Moses contains repeated commands to reverence the sanctuary of God. But in the Gospel, of which one main object was to unfold the spiritual features of all true worship, little is said on this subject. Yet St. Paul does contrast the place of united Christian worship with private houses, and assert its claim to especial reverence: 'What! have ye not houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the church of God?' Every place, usually set apart for Christian assemblies, has thus a claim to reverence, not unlike that which was given to the Temple in earlier days. The same Apostle tells us that the will-worship, which neglects the body, is of no real worth against the indulgence of a carnal mind. The same is true of the body of religion. A total neglect of outward form and observance, transferred from the clothing of the person to the sanctuaries of religion, as if God were most honoured by a mean and slovenly service, is of no worth as a means of resistance to false doctrine and legal superstition. Man is a compound being, in whom flesh and spirit are joined together.

The same law obtains in every branch of human duty. Inward feelings cannot be wholly separated from outward signs of their presence; and those who keep their heart with diligence will also 'keep their foot' when they go to the house of God.

What, then, is the duty of the Christian Ruler with regard to these places of sacred worship? He must, in virtue of his own faith and Christian profession, look on them as places specially honoured with the presence of his Lord—electric links of union between heaven above and earth beneath—to draw down upon his people showers of blessing. The deeper and simpler his faith, the more thoroughly he will believe that the prayers there offered up to God avail more, for the national peace and safety, than myriads of armed warriors when the fear of God is absent, or than all the wisdom and policy of Egypt and Babylon. Reason, policy, gratitude, and piety, alike demand that the laws shall also do reverence to God's sanctuaries; that a double shield of protection be held over them, to keep them from violence and sacrilege; that encouragement be given to private zeal, when it rears these monuments of piety and faith where they are most needed by a growing population; and that provision be made for their preservation, as centres of social influence, bulwarks against national impiety, noble monuments of civilization in its highest form, and, whenever rightly occupied by faithful pastors and teachers, continual fountain-heads of morality, religious faith, and Christian love.

This duty of kings and rulers to reverence God's sanctuaries is confirmed by many examples in His word.

Three persons only, besides the Baptist, are there predicted by name before their birth. All these were kings, conspicuous by the honour they paid to the house of God; Solomon, by whom the temple was built; Josiah, who cleansed it from idolatrous pollutions; and Cyrus, who restored it from ruin and desolation. He was a heathen king, not connected with the Jewish theocracy, and still his birth is announced beforehand with these words of honour,—‘That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, who shall perform all my pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.’ And when the time came for the fulfilment of the prophecy, how clearly the great law of royal duty shines out in his decree! ‘Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (he is the Lord) which is in Jerusalem.’ The contents of the decree are then explained: ‘Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid, and let the expenses be given out of the king’s house.’

These examples are recorded for our instruction. Unless the worship of God has become less excellent in itself, or less vital to the prosperity of nations, or Christians are now so spiritual that they need no houses for public worship, and owe no special reverence to the peculiar presence of the Most High; the conduct which has been



thus predicted and approved in a heathen monarch must reveal a perpetual law of duty, binding and imperative on Christian princes and rulers to the end of time.

VII. The Immunities of Sacred Persons, or the ordained ministers of the Gospel, the clergy of the Christian Church, form another main element in national Christianity, and in the outward establishment of the Church of Christ.

What is the duty of the Ruler, himself a member of the Church, towards those who, by Christ's own appointment, are set apart to be its pastors and guides? He is bound to hear God's word at their mouth, and to yield them the honour due to their sacred office. Is this personal tribute the whole extent of his obligation? If so, the law will not recognise the pastoral office of the Christian clergy, nor permit their sacred functions to exempt them from any kind of civil or military service. But this will involve many anomalies, hurtful to the State itself, and dishonouring to that Lord whose commission they bear. The Ruler, who understands the origin of their office and its social importance, will pursue a different course. He will not crouch at their feet, like those who are the slaves of a blind superstition, nor seek to buy their subserviency with baits of worldly preferment. But he will recognise publicly the nature of their commission, as the servants of Christ and teachers of the Christian people, and treat it with honour in all his laws and proclamations. He will exempt them from social duties, binding on other citizens, which would seriously interfere with the proper work of their sacred ministry. He will remember that the noblest part of his commission is the

praise of them that do well, and will therefore honour those of them who fulfil their office in zeal and uprightness; so that the royal favour may rest, like sunshine, on the most faithful, learned, and holy, among the ordained pastors of the Church of Christ. The details must depend, in part, on the usages of society, and in part on the political and social condition of every separate commonwealth or kingdom; but the main principle of duty is clear, and rests on some of the deepest instincts of Christian faith and religious reverence.

The same truth receives a striking confirmation from the decree of Artaxerxes, and the reflections of Ezra, the restorer of the law, on the goodness of God in disposing the heart of that heathen king to fulfil this great moral obligation. (Ezra, vii. 11-27, 28.) 'Blessed,' he exclaims, 'be the Lord God of our fathers, who hath put such a thing in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is at Jerusalem.' The policy which exempted the ministers of God's house from 'toll, tribute, or custom,' awakened devout thanksgiving in the heart of God's servants in those days. A gleam of light broke in on the darkness of heathenism, revealing the duty of monarchs towards the God of heaven. And now, when the true light shines clearly around them, Christian kings ought not to be more backward than their heathen predecessors in acts of allegiance to the King of nations. They should learn, by public honour to His appointed servants, to fulfil the predicted work of the 'sons of the mighty,' and give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name.

VIII. Again, the Sacred Services and religious rites of the Church, in the case of all its members, create social

distinctions, which the laws have need to recognise. For all other relations issue, like branches, from the primitive and fundamental ordinance of marriage. And hence, like marriage itself, they must tend to assume a religious form, and borrow their sanctions and their most essential features from the revealed word of God.

And first, that recognition of the social claims of the Gospel must be partial and imperfect, which is confined to the Christian clergy alone. Every believer in Christ, though in a lower degree, is put in trust with the Gospel. His Christian profession gives him a just claim to be governed on principles which harmonise with his character. If the Church abode in its true dignity, full of wisdom, purity, and heavenly hope and desire, a wise Ruler could and might deal with its members on a different footing from other subjects. He could appeal with them to more powerful motives, set before them a higher standard, and apply the laws of social duty to their consciences with greater power. 'To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' Again, sins become crimes, when once the mischief they cause to society is become plain to the general conscience. Many things are criminal in Christian subjects, which can hardly be so called in the case of others. A higher standard of morals is naturally required in the government of a Christian, than of a heathen or infidel, people. And hence also Christian discipleship is a social gain, and deserves some recognition and honour from the just and upright Ruler. Extreme care, no doubt, will be needed to keep the principle from abuse, and to avoid encouraging hypocrisy and false profession. But the principle itself is not less

certainly true. That credible profession of faith, which is the test of membership in a living and faithful Church, involves a higher standard of social duty, and is an act of obedience to Christ, and a benefit to the whole society, of which the collective guilt is lessened, and the moral force increased. Now this lays the Ruler under a double obligation, to mark these disciples by social immunities, enough to indicate the social value of sincere Christianity, and at the same time to require from them a higher standard of social conduct. Faults may be crimes in their case, which are not in others, because they violate the higher moral standard of the Church; while every crime in them involves a double guilt, because it dishonours their profession, and is a virtual treason against the religious foundations of the State.

But if the ordinances of the Church tend naturally to introduce various social distinctions, which the laws of the land ought to recognise, it is no less true that all social relations, wherever Christianity prevails, must be combined with the sanctions of religion. Their common centre and root is the ordinance of marriage. Now this, while it is the fountain-head of the existence and various relations of human society, is based inseparably on a Divine command, and fenced around with the most sacred truths and lessons of the Christian faith. Its laws, its tenets, and its obligations, all imply the dominion of God, and flow out from the earliest written revelation of His will. It bears with it, even in its degradation, the memories of Paradise. When turned into a mere civil contract, it becomes, like other human contracts, dissoluble at once by mutual consent, and loses all those features in

which its essence consists. But viewed as a sacred vow to God, it gathers fresh power and depth of meaning from every successive stage of revelation, till it becomes a figure of the highest mystery of the Gospel, and a type and earnest of the coming glory of the Church, the bride of Christ, in the day of the resurrection.

Now here what course must the Christian Ruler pursue? The first step is to recognize its religious character, and thus to make its rule and law the registry of a sacred vow by the ministers of Christ's Church; while every other case is treated as an exception only, to be dealt with on special grounds. The second is to view it as a civil relation, entirely separable from religious services which may attend it, but governed by the law of indissoluble union, so that its breach is not only a personal wrong, but a social crime. The third is to abrogate its religious character, and also to dispense with the laws which grow out of its sacredness; so as to turn it into a mutual promise, terminable on certain conditions, by mutual consent alone.

Where the law does not recognise the religious nature of marriage, one of the two other alternatives must be embraced. But each of them is exposed to very weighty objections. To treat marriage as only a civil affair, and still to impose restrictions, due to its sacred origin and character, is an inconsistency which cannot last. Consent of parties must in this case replace the authority of a Divine Lawgiver, and the result will be a wide license of polygamy, divorce, and concubinage. The stream cannot rise higher than its fountain, nor the standard of practice be kept higher than the principles to which alone the



appeal of neutral statesmen is made. The third alternative will alone remain. Marriage will come to be viewed as merely the consent of two parties to live together, and will last till they disagree. To make it indissoluble would imply a reference to a higher authority, which the law has ceased to recognise. A deplorable dissolution of manners is sure to follow. Unions rashly formed, and as rashly dissolved, a sensuality that destroys all noble and delicate feeling, a levity that banishes serious thought, will profane the ordinance of Paradise, the pledge on earth of the coming resurrection, and degrade the crown and topstone of human society almost to a level with the blind appetites of the beasts of the field.

Such is the natural result of the neutral theory, which decides that the State and the Church of Christ have no rightful union with each other. We must revert, then, to a wiser and truer doctrine, and own that the State is bound to recognise, in marriage, a Divine appointment, a sacred and holy thing. It ought, then, to place some fence around it, and make some religious service essential to its legal recognition. It has power, no doubt, to entrust this office to Christian magistrates, and to call on them to register those religious vows which form the essence of real marriage. But where the Visible Church exists, it seems more natural to employ its pastors in a work so near akin to their proper functions; since the ordinance approaches very nearly to the nature of a Christian sacrament, and has been consecrated to prefigure the most glorious hope of the Gospel of Christ. And since almost every other civil relation depends on that of marriage, which decides the whole law of inheritance, and forms one

main branch in every civil code, we have thus a crucial test and evidence that a Christian State, wisely administered, is bound to contract a very close and intimate alliance with the Visible Church of Christ. When this union is fully dissolved, it may be expected that polygamy, ceaseless and causeless divorce, and unbounded profligacy, will more and more set in, and overspread the land.

The Christian State and the Visible Church, where each fulfils aright its own office, must thus tend, in various ways, and almost at every point of social life, into close and inseparable union. They cannot, indeed, be kept asunder unless at the price of social death. Religion will have to be debased into a mere abstraction, a thing for holes and corners, unfit for the public eye, a vain and empty shadow; or else, if this union be forsworn, the State will be superseded, in every sphere of its activity, by a mightier and holier power. The king, who refuses to acknowledge the Church with public honour, and to embody in his laws its just claim to royal patronage, encouragement, and favour, must either become its open persecutor, or resign his power tamely into other hands; or else, to retain and strengthen his authority, he will strive to make the lessons of mere worldliness prevail more and more over those of religious faith in the hearts and lives of the people. Such a Sodom may, for a little time, be fair and goodly to the eye, 'well watered everywhere, as the garden of the Lord, as the land of Egypt,' until vice and profligacy, and growing ungodliness, have ripened it slowly for the fiery judgments of heaven.

The Ruler who has taken counsel from the Word of

God, and His lessons of everlasting truth, will pursue a very different course. His eyes will be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with him. He will hallow the Lord's-day, reverence God's sanctuaries, and honour the pastors of the Church, who derive their authority from that risen Saviour, who is the Lord of lords and King of kings. He will distinguish Christians from heathen subjects by some special privileges, joined with answering obligations. The services of the Church will have due honour, and all the relations and duties of civil society, will be leavened, moulded, and upheld by the truths, doctrines, and precepts of the Gospel. They will thus be bathed in a heavenly light, which beams down upon them from the Word of God, which links them with all the wonderful works of God in past ages, and with the hope of a coming redemption, and thus unites the chief and foremost bond of all human society with the early memories of Paradise, and with all the most blessed and glorious promises of the life to come.

## CHAPTER III.

## ON CHURCH ENDOWMENTS.

THE duty of a National Church establishment depends upon the truth, that the Visible Church is the ordinance and appointment of Christ, from whom kings derive their authority, so that the Christian Ruler is bound to recognise its existence and social worth, to commend and promote the objects at which it aims, and to yield help for their attainment, by honouring the Christian Sabbath, the houses set apart for God's worship, the ministers of Christ, and the religious element in marriage and kindred institutions of God. Out of this great principle an important question will arise: What is the duty of the State with regard to sacred offerings to the Church of God? Must it refuse to recognise or confirm them altogether? Must it, on the other hand, recognise every offering to every body that calls itself a religious sect, church, or communion, and lend its sanction to perpetuate them for ever? Ought it to prohibit or to encourage the offerings of private Christians, or to leave them without oversight or control, however large they may become? Ought there, finally, to be national as well as private

offerings to the cause of Christ, and direct contributions to sacred objects from the public treasury?

There are many ways, besides gifts of money, in which governors may show favour or disfavour towards the Church of Christ. All these involve equally the two principles of religious establishments, the duty of honouring nationally the truth of God, and the further obligation to own, in the Visible Church, Christ's own ordinance, by which true religion and the gospel of salvation are to be maintained and diffused through the earth. But the question of national endowments includes a further element of Christian expediency. We have to decide how rulers may best promote the true interests of religion, and the highest welfare of their people, so far as these depend on the amount and the distribution of Church revenues. Many varieties of judgment on these details may consist with a full agreement in the principle of a national religion, and in the obligation of earthly rulers, under the Gospel, and in their official character, to pay open allegiance to the King of kings.

Here, at the outset, a frequent mistake has to be cleared away. The question is not, whether the funds of the Church should be wholly derived from private bounty, or entirely from national revenues to the exclusion of the private offerings of the faithful. The divergence of judgment has a much more narrow limit. Whenever the State recognises the validity of gifts and bequests, given to a religious body for a specific purpose, that corporate body receives a partial establishment, and is become one of the legal institutions of the realm. And that this is right, most friends of the voluntary system allow. On



the other hand, the friends of national endowments have seldom, if ever, supposed that they ought to replace and set aside all private offerings from the faithful. The two mites of the widow, and the royal presents of the kings of Sheba and Seba, should alike, in their judgment, meet in the treasury of the Lord. The whole nation, represented by its rulers, as well as each private citizen, should take part in the Church's work of love. And their maxim is that public offerings should encourage, and not supersede, the impulses of individual piety; and royal decrees, like that of Cyrus, only serve to elicit and complete the freewill offerings of the people of God.

Not only the theory of State endowments, but their actual history and limits, have often been misconceived. The revenues of the Church have hardly ever arisen from pensions bestowed by the will of rulers. Only a very small part has commonly been derived from this source. They have been mainly due, either to private offerings, of which the State has regulated or varied the application; or else to acts of the legislature, which have ratified an obligation previously felt and owned by the people at large. Religious endowments, though called national in later times, have thus been mixed and various in their first origin. The will and choice of the first donor tends to lose itself, in course of time, in the two main ideas, which form the warrant of the rulers of the State in accepting the guardianship of such sacred offerings. These are the consecration of the gifts to God himself for the use of the Church, guided and controlled by the teaching of His word; and their devotion to the real good of the State, by

helping forward the culture and training of its citizens in true godliness and Christian morality.

The real inquiry, then, has three parts. Is it the duty of the Christian Ruler publicly to encourage and sanction the offerings of private Christians to the Church of Christ? Is it his duty to regulate them, when offered; to restrain excess, misdirection, careless waste, or superstitious abuse, and thus to ensure, as far as possible, their wise application? Ought he further, in his public capacity, to honour Christ's ordinance by direct gifts from the State, so as openly and avowedly to help forward the cause of Christ, and the progress of the kingdom of God on the earth?

And, first, it is the bounden duty of the Ruler to encourage the freewill offerings of Christians, and not to regard them with a cold neutrality, until there is a general provision for the religious wants of the people. For such a Ruler is no mere hangman or gaoler, to imprison a few thieves, and execute a few murderers, and to leave all besides to follow their own will. He is appointed for 'the praise of them that do well.' This is the noblest part of the trust he has received from God. The neglect of it is treachery to those over whom he rules, and to God who has raised him to the throne. The Christian does well when he dedicates part of his substance to the cause of Christ. Whether it be to build churches, to provide for their pastors, to raise schools, or support religious teachers, the work is one of faith and love, and has a double blessing. It benefits society, and is well-pleasing to God. Is the Ruler to have no words of

praise for such offerings of the faithful? Or are these to be barren compliments, with no actions to correspond? Ought he not rather, by legislative arrangements, to render these works more facile and easy to private Christians, meeting their efforts with an outstretched and helping hand? He must do this, or be faithless to the tenure on which he holds his office. Neglect is sometimes as fatal as direct opposition. The Ruler, who promotes every kind of social activity except the best and noblest of all, does practically condemn Christian liberality, and teach his people to count religion the one thing needless, instead of the one thing supremely needful, without which arts, science, civilisation, avail almost nothing.

A second reason may be drawn from analogy. Every social improvement naturally receives the patronage and encouragement of a wise ruler. Medical and provident societies for the poor, infirmaries and hospitals, royal institutions and scientific associations, all of them are accustomed to receive, in various degrees, the countenance of the State. They are recognised by the laws, made capable of receiving benefactions, and are frequently relieved from imposts which fall on private dwellings. If other good works receive this aid, why should religious churches and bequests to the Church of Christ be alone excluded from the privilege?

Another reason may be found in the peculiar claims of religious liberality; for this exceeds all other forms of benevolence in the dignity of its object, and the greatness of the benefit it aims to secure. Others may prune away the twigs of vice, but this endeavours to lay the axe to

the root of the tree from which all social evil is derived. Others may adorn this mortal life with some transitory decoration, but this diffuses the seeds of an immortal life, that will endure for ever. The merchant who cares only for pence, and neglects pounds, is not so foolish as the Ruler who patronises frescoes and equestrian statues, and lends no help to the great work of providing for the religious teaching and spiritual elevation of the people over whom he rules.

A fourth reason for the same course is found in the motives of a wise economy. One great end of the royal or magisterial office is the diminution of crime. And how can this be best and most cheaply attained? By a total neglect of the moral training of the people, while prisons are multiplied, and a host of policemen are spread over the land? Such a policy is expensive, as well as irreligious. It cuts off one head after another from the hydra, but applies no remedy to stay their prolific generation. It cuts off the tops of the thistles, and leaves the thistledown to spread through the land. It is a cheap and wise exchange, when a country can have more schools and fewer prisons, more faithful pastors and fewer soldiers and police. The same law, which bids the Ruler punish crime, bids him also encourage heartily the means Divinely ordained for rooting out its fatal seeds and germs from the hearts of men.

The precedents of Scripture yield a further argument. These are full and strong. Moses was 'king in Jeshurun,' and exhorted the people to bring their gifts for the service of the tabernacle. David, the king after God's own heart, followed in the same steps. He presented his own

offering, and then made the appeal to his subjects : ‘ Who is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord ? ’ When their offerings have been largely made, in response to his own invitation, he gives thanks to God, who has disposed them to so good a work. So Hezekiah and his princes, when they saw the heaps of offerings by the people, ‘ blessed the Lord and His people Israel.’ The same course meets with equal commendation in heathen kings, as we see plainly in the decrees of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes. Our Lord himself, when He entered Jerusalem in His character of the King of Israel, made it one of His acts, in those few days of royal manifestation, to commend the poor widow who cast in freely her two mites into the treasury of God.

Finally, this duty of the ruler is confirmed by the honour due to God’s holy name ; for the feature which distinguishes these sacred gifts from other forms of benevolence is their direct consecration to the service of God. They are first presented to the Lord himself, to be afterwards employed, as He has ordained, in the great objects of His kingdom. Thus they bear a direct witness to the supreme dominion and lordship of the Most High. To honour His great name is the noblest and highest aim of the Christian ruler. If he is bound to promote those applications of wealth, which simply minister to the passing comfort of his people, how much more those acts of Christian devotedness, which not only benefit the people, but are an open acknowledgment of God, and bind the nation, by golden links of love and reverence, to the footstool of His glorious throne.

But if the Ruler is bound to encourage, he is bound



no less plainly to regulate and control the freewill offerings of the faithful to the Church of God. Dangerous abuses may creep in through the superstition of the people, and the avarice of the priesthood, and turn these gifts into the materials for a Babel of corrupt will-worship and ambitious pride. It is needless to multiply testimonies to the reality of the danger. The history of the Visible Church, for more than a thousand years, proves how gigantic the evil has often become. No wise statesman, or thoughtful observer of history, will deny the greatness of the peril, when revenues, once consecrated in name to the service of God, and in reality to the disposal of the clergy, are entirely exempted from all civil control.

The argument does not rest on expediency alone. The terms of the Ruler's office compel him to exercise a constant right of supervision. He is bound to encourage offerings really made to the cause of Christ. But he is no less bound to withhold his sanction from those which are antichristian. He cannot, without sin and folly, lend his authority to perpetuate the abuse of property for the spread and practice of fatal superstitions. If believers in sorcery should dedicate their estate to multiply heathen incantations, the laws ought not to be prostituted, to give permanence to such blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits. Civil rulers, then, are bound to distinguish those abuses and superstitions, which are wholly unworthy to be sanctioned by law; those religious objects, which, although defective and mingled with partial evil, may yet be recognised without moral guilt; and those which claim open and unmingled approval. There will be some religious bequests to which all sanction should be denied,

others will be tolerated and legalised, and others positively commended and fully approved.

But sacred gifts may be wasted by neglect, squandered in luxury, or perverted by schemes of priestly covetousness and ambition. And here the duty of the Ruler is plain. He is the guardian for the people, to secure the due fulfilment of trusts designed for their benefit. He is the minister of God to execute righteous judgment, and ought to restrain unfaithfulness in the clergy, when it injures the State, and brings dishonour on the name of Christ. He ought, then, to repress every abuse which would turn Church property into the prey of mere hirelings, wholly careless of their sacred calling, or into the engines for building up a dangerous edifice of ecclesiastical tyranny. He is equally bound to strengthen the hands of those who use sacred funds aright, so as to promote the social welfare of the State, and the spiritual enlightenment of souls. To neglect this double work of supervision is really to abdicate a sacred and solemn trust.

The wise distribution of Church revenues is a further reason for the control of the Civil Ruler. In every large body there is needed a power of adjustment, to suit the wants and circumstances which vary from age to age. The bequests of former days may be very unsuitable, in their details and original distribution, to the requirements of later times. In such cases the will of the testator ought to yield to a higher law of public morality. It is unreasonable that the choice, or even the caprice, of those who died centuries ago, and whose own judgment would probably have been greatly altered could they decide anew, should outweigh the claims of expediency and public

wisdom, when Rulers consult earnestly, in the sight of God, for the actual wants of the nation. When sacred revenues have once been sanctioned by law, legislative interference will be required to modify their application. In this work the Ruler himself is bound by higher laws,—allegiance to Divine truth, submission to the revealed will of Christ, a wise regard to the actual condition of the people, and the duty of avoiding collision with the vested rights of the living, or needless and rash departure from the wishes of the dead. Within these limits the duty of regulation and control is clear and certain. Supreme power is given to the Ruler for this very purpose, that every institution and every law of the State may be moulded continually into that form, which conduces most to the honour of God, and the true welfare and happiness of the whole nation.

But a further duty rests upon the Christian Ruler, of direct national contribution to the expenses of God's public worship. While he ought not to supersede private offerings, he ought never to countenance the profane idea, that religion is the only thing which demands no public sacrifice, and has no claim on the revenues of the State.

And, first, he ought to provide, from the public funds, for reverent worship by the servants of the State in their public character. The seats of justice, and the halls of legislation, should be hallowed by prayer and thanksgiving to God. This obligation must rest on the supreme executive power, whether confided to one or many persons. Where they neglect this duty, an example of ungodliness is held out to the whole nation, and must work serious mischief to the people. If kings, God's ministers, make

no provision that their own household, the senators, judges, and princes, should do homage to Him who has placed them in their seats of honour, how can they expect their subjects to outstrip themselves in reverence to His authority, and obedience to his laws? Those who, like David, rule in the fear of God, will never be satisfied to close themselves in cedar, while God's ark dwells only in curtains; nor that art, science, and taste, should lavish their treasures on the halls where they meet for public counsel, and the worship of God be wholly forgotten, or treated with a penurious neglect that forms a painful contrast with their prodigality in meaner things.

But the Ruler's duty extends also to the poor and neglected parts of the nation. He has to fulfil the great lesson, once taught by the gift of the manna in the wilderness, and make the abundance of one part become a supply for the wants of another. The deepest of all wants, that of the means and helps for right worship, cannot be excluded from this law of compensation. It is an act of prudence, no less than of charity, to provide means of religious instruction for those who would else be destitute. It stops the most dangerous avenues of crime, and brings the wastes of practical heathenism under the ennobling and purifying influence of the Word of God. Hereby, also, rulers attain the nearest resemblance to their Lord, who places this last and highest among His manifold works of mercy—'To the poor the Gospel is preached.' Such a course bears witness to two main principles of supreme importance:—that righteousness and the fear of God are the true glory and security of a nation, and that kings are then most honourable when they watch with

earnest care for the welfare of even the poorest and meanest in their land.

An objection, however, has been brought against this view from the words of the Apostle:—‘The Lord hath ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.’ The inference has been drawn, that all national endowments are opposed to a fundamental law of the kingdom of Christ. The ministers of the Gospel ought to depend, it is said, on the free gifts of private Christians, and not on the compulsory endowments of legislators and kings. In this way alone can they who preach the Gospel ‘live of the Gospel.’

The confidence with which this argument has been advanced is most surprising, since the passage, when closely examined, points to the very opposite conclusion. The Apostle rests his maxim on a well-defined analogy between the maintenance of the Jewish priesthood and of the Christian ministry:—‘Do ye not know that they who minister about holy things live of the temple, and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? EVEN so hath the Lord ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.’ Of what nature, then, was this maintenance of the priests to which allusion is made? Did it consist wholly or mainly of freewill offerings of the people? Far from it. The tithes enforced by law, the sin-offerings, and stated sacrifices, prescribed by legal ordinances, were the main part of their sustenance. The public tributes of the kings, the legal tributes of the sanctuary, mingled with the voluntary gifts of the people. This is the precedent to which St. Paul makes his appeal, and none could be more fatal to the



argument which Dr. Wardlaw has endeavoured to deduce from his words. They teach really the opposite lesson, that a legal and fixed provision for the Christian clergy is rightly combined with the free and voluntary offerings of the people, amongst whom they minister the word of God.

But if we dismiss the precedent, and consider the statement by itself, our conclusion will be the same. A national endowment implies a recognition, by rulers, of the truth and social worth of the Gospel. Placed on a lower footing, it is justly to be condemned. It is then no act of religion, but of profane meddling with holy things, worthy of the strongest censure from Christian men. But when kings and rulers believe and obey the Gospel, their public offerings come plainly within the scope of the text. To live of the Gospel means to live upon a reward offered to those who bring good tidings by those who receive them. Whether the offering proceed from a whole State or a private person, its original nature is the same. In one kind of gift the freedom of the giver is more conspicuous, in the other the permanence and excellency of the gift; but each alike is a reward paid, whether by prince or people, to the messengers of good tidings. Private offerings illustrate the liberty of the Gospel, and the fresh impulse of gratitude and love which it awakens in the hearts of men. But the fixed endowments of States are a witness, no less clear and impressive, to the width and grandeur of that Divine message, which, while it blesses individuals, overshadows the whole world with its canopy of Divine grace, reaches onward into distant ages, and continues the same until heaven and earth shall pass away. There are gifts which, like the dew, fall in countless drops,

freely and insensibly, on the pastures of the wilderness ; but there needs also the majestic river, fed from the mountain-sides of earthly power, which moves on, year after year, with a settled law, and in full current, to shed beauty and fertility on all the quiet valley through which it flows.

But an argument has been urged against national endowments from their compulsory character. They have been even charged with injustice, fraud, and robbery. On the other hand, the voluntary principle is said to be equivalent to the Scriptural law of faith working by love, and zeal for the glory of Christ, displayed in willing efforts to extend the knowledge of His name. ‘In private offerings,’ it is urged, ‘the contribution is freely given by the man to whom of right it belongs for an object which he approves. In national endowments it is first exacted by official power from the people, and then bestowed on an object which multitudes of men disapprove and disown. The others are cheated into the fancy that they are getting their religion for nothing, when they are paying for it indirectly ; and the amount of their privilege is that of furnishing the cost, and then obtaining the article as a present.’

These remarks equally misrepresent the historical facts, and the benefit really sought by national endowments. Few indeed are so foolish as to mistake them for a clever device by which the Gospel can be sustained without any cost ; and it is to be hoped that, even in these days, all Christians are not so sordid and covetous as wholly to have reversed the experience of David, and to count it an immense gain when they can offer to God

that which costs them nothing. The real benefit is of a different and less suspicious kind. The bounty of one age is made availing for those which follow; a wiser distribution becomes possible than momentary acts of bounty can secure; and public honour is rendered, by the whole nation, to the worth and excellence of the truth of God.

The force of the objection depends on the contrast between an owner and a steward, or between a compulsory payment, due to the hand of power, and the free impulse of charity. But on closer search this contrast will disappear.

And first, are voluntary offerings purely voluntary? National endowments involve no compulsion from foreign states, but from a ruling to a subject part of the same community. How is it, then, in the microcosm of the human heart? When the Christian lays his offering on the Lord's altar, is there never a struggle or conflict within? Is there no debate between enlightened conscience and the suggestive whispers of indolence, selfishness, and worldly prudence? Christians of liberal heart and glowing charity may perhaps be unconscious of a struggle. Their offerings are the gift of the whole man, with scarcely any sensible whisper of opposing selfishness. And yet, even in the best and holiest, worldly and selfish feelings are ready, every moment, to revive and gather new strength. In other cases lower motives may turn the scale; and pride, habit, and love of praise may secure a contribution which the love of Christ alone is too feeble to secure. In others, all these motives may be too feeble to overcome the covetousness of the heart, and the streams of charity are dried up, or flow with a scanty, half-frozen

current. Those who plead for Christian objects have often too much cause to feel how compulsory and reluctant are those very gifts, which are called, in popular language, free and spontaneous.

There is thus a partial compulsion even in the case of private offerings to God. The spirit needs to subdue the covetousness and reluctance of the flesh, before the hand will open, to pour its gifts into His treasury. There is a secret conflict, of which the world sees nothing, before any great work is wrought by the contributions of Christian zeal. How many a whisper of selfish prudence has been silenced! how many a forbidden desire restrained! Freedom without compulsion is the privilege of a world where sin and evil have no place. The highest attainment of Christian generosity in the present life is to rule in the midst of enemies, and to constrain the lower and rebellious instincts of the heart to do homage to the claims of the Gospel.

Again, compulsion is not the only feature of national endowments. When pensions and rewards are given for great public services, and a burst of gratitude hails the deliverers of a nation, or the guardians of its honour, who thinks or speaks of compulsion in that hour of joy? Yet these gifts are just as compulsory as national endowments of religious truth. Are, then, the honour of God, the welfare of souls, the messages of redeeming grace, truths that humanise, exalt, and ennoble the soul of man, the only motives which can never kindle a generous enthusiasm in the bosom of nobles, senators, and kings? Can there be no freedom and spontaneous gladness in their public offerings to a cause so blessed and holy? Surely

the words of David are a sufficient answer, when he presented his treasures, gained by repeated national victories, to build a temple to the God of Israel. We are there taught that national gifts, as well as private offerings, may be spontaneous and voluntary in the highest degree, when once the Spirit of God stirs the hearts of princes, like the heart of David, to rule in the fear of the Lord.

From the Ruler or legislator let us turn to the people. Is the payment of tributes, wisely applied, an act of mere compulsion? It may be so to covetous hearts, but never to the sincere Christian. He sees in it an expression of obedience and reverence to the Lord whom he loves, and by whom 'kings reign and princes decree justice.' And when those tributes are wisely dedicated to promote the best interest of men, and the spread of pure and undefiled religion, his heart and conscience, and all the powers of his soul, will unite freely in the offering. It will be rendered gladly, as a willing tribute to the command of God, the claims of just authority, the welfare of the nation, and the glory of Christ.

Here, too, as in other cases, there may be a partial compulsion. Every sacrifice, however worthy its object, is compulsory to the short-sighted, the selfish, and the covetous. Mistaken scruples, or false views of national duty, may lead to a similar result even in others. But the same thing occurs perpetually in the case of private religious offerings. The object may be approved, and no mere covetousness may restrain the hand; and still serious doubts on the expediency of special agencies may raise a conflict, and make the Christian give with reluctance, or entirely withhold his gifts. Honest prejudices



in public or in private, often obstruct the free current of Christian bounty; but they cannot alter the eternal laws of duty on which, in both cases alike, its exercise must depend.

Some partial compulsion, then, either in national or personal acts, attends the highest freedom attainable in the present world. But its worst form is when the lower motives prevail over the higher. In private, it is when covetousness, selfish ease, or unwise scruples, gain mastery over the enlightened conscience, the loving heart, the bountiful eye, and the open and liberal hand. In the State, it is when unbelief and the love of money triumph publicly over the fear of God, and honour and reverence for His messages of eternal truth. It is when the homage, due to the Gospel of salvation, is debased into wretched bribes, offered by infidel politicians to idolatries which they despise. It is when the faith of David and Hezekiah is hissed out of the public councils, to be replaced by a dreary blank of godless legislation. It is when Christians are compelled to pay for all the follies of an infidel government, which casts aside all public reverence for the Almighty, obedience to His word, and fear of His judgments; with the assurance that not one farthing of all their tribute will be spent on objects the most vital of all to the nation's welfare, and the dearest of all to their own hearts, the promotion of God's glory by the spread of saving truth and light among the multitudes of their fellow-men.

The objection, then, loudly urged against national endowments from their compulsory character involves a double error. It imagines only contrast where there is a

full and exact resemblance ; since predominant choice and partial compulsion, until the soul or the nation arrives at perfect unity and wisdom, concur alike in every private and every public offering. It errs still further by supposing that this compulsion can be avoided by a scheme of national indifference. This illusion is no less complete and mischievous than the other. The ruler is a trustee to administer the public funds for the objects most beneficial to the whole State. If all its members agree with each other what objects are most beneficial, then, and then only, all compulsion would cease. But so long as they differ, those must suffer compulsion whose views are sacrificed, whatever those views may be. Whether the compulsion is necessary or needless, salutary or hurtful, depends on the question whether their judgment be right or wrong. If it is a wiser application of public money to support scriptural schools, and endow places of holy worship, than only to multiply police, or open museums for Sabbath-breakers ; then to apply State revenues to the latter objects, and exclude the former, is a compulsion practised by folly and ungodliness on the faith, wisdom, and piety of the land. The nearest approach to perfect freedom is when Divine truth, righteousness, and charity, prevail alike in the heart of the Christian, and the counsels of the State ; and when selfishness, cold neglect, and vain scruples, with those religious jealousies which hinder all good works, are banished by the wise and holy zeal that longs intensely, both in public and private, to glorify Christ, and help forward the highest spiritual interests of the souls whom He has redeemed.

## CHAPTER IV.

ON THE CORRUPTIONS AND DIVISIONS OF  
THE CHURCH.

THE relation between the State and the visible Church of Christ has now been examined, when that Church continues faithful to the high purpose for which it was ordained. Had such been its actual course, the doubts which now perplex so many Christians might never have arisen. No serious difference of judgment ever appeared on the duty of Christian rulers to help on the spread of the Gospel, and give public honour and aid to Christ's ministers, until the Church had been largely infected with superstition and idolatry, or rent with schisms and divisions. The general duty is then beset with difficulties, not easy to overcome. And if the faith and wisdom of rulers should decay at the very time, and through the working of the very evil by which the need for them is increased, a theory becomes very convenient which boldly cuts the knot, and absolves them from all care for the welfare of the Church, the cause of Christ, and the progress of true religion. It is needful, then, to inquire briefly how the general laws of duty are modified, and what new form they must assume, where superstition and self-will have defiled

the purity, or impaired and destroyed the external unity of the Church of Christ.

The Church, as a visible body, combines two opposite characters. It is a witness for truth upon earth ; but its life is hidden in heaven. It has outward ordinances and signs of membership, by which it is visible to the world, but its true life and essence, in the working of God's Spirit in the hearts as its true and faithful members, is fully discernible by God alone. Its outward elements are Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the Christian Ministry ; but its inner life consists in faith, hope, and love. Its sameness, to outward observers, depends on the unbroken succession of its ministry and its sacraments. But to the eye of an enlightened faith, it consists in the preservation of sound doctrine, pure worship, the love of the saints, and the spirit of those who are strangers and pilgrims, looking forward in hope for the promised advent of the kingdom of God.

In a healthy state of the Church all these features are combined. But the Word of God gives us no assurance that their first union would continue without serious change. The outward ordinances, which link it with the things of earth, expose it to earthly corruptions. Baptism, the seal and sign of God's covenant, may then be perverted into a superstitious charm, and made a substitute for real faith, and for the true working of God's Spirit in the souls of men. The Lord's Supper, the appointed means to strengthen faith and increase Christian love, may become a source of bitter strife, an engine of priestly ambition and tyranny, and lead to strange and monstrous forms of creature worship. The orderly succession of the

Christian clergy, the national means for keeping the testimony for Christ's truth unimpaired, and dispensing the word of God, may be substituted for the inward realities of the Gospel, and pave the way for an usurpation which places a mock Christ and real Antichrist on the throne of the Saviour. The spiritual graces which are the true life of the Church, and on which its very existence depends, will then be blighted and almost destroyed. Faith will sink into a blind and superstitious credulity. Hope will be fixed no longer on the promised return of Christ, but on the growing triumphs of an ambitious hierarchy, subjugating to itself the sceptres of rulers and the consciences of mankind. Christian love will be replaced by zeal for the interests of an ecclesiastical corporation or the success of some religious party, with bitter hatred for all who reject the yoke of bondage, and refuse to worship the golden image, set up for their adoration by royal or priestly hands.

Such are the dangers to which, from the very nature of its office, the visible Church is exposed. While it acts mightily on the world, to raise it to a higher standard of Christian faith and practice, that world reacts powerfully to corrupt the messenger, and pervert the heavenly message. There is no promise that these evils would not arise and prevail. The voice of history, the warnings of providence, the precedents of earlier times, all teach the opposite lesson. The idolatries of the Jewish Church, in the worship of the golden calf at the foot of Sinai, the sin of Baalpeor, the Danite idolatry under the Judges, the calves at Bethel and Dan in the divided kingdom, the Bual worship in the days of Ahab and Manasseh, are all



types for the latter days, and written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the world are come. The Spirit of God taught expressly from the first, by the inspired Apostles, that there would ensue a wide apostasy in the bosom of the Church, and doctrines of demon-worship, and ascetic superstitions, lead many to depart from the true faith of the Gospel. The Gentiles, grafted on the stock of Abraham, would boast against the Jewish root, and thus be in danger of rejection through pride and unbelief. The true witnesses of Christ would have to prophesy in sackcloth through weary times of spiritual drought, and of a heathenish profanation of the Church, the house of God. A mystic Babylon would arise, and, while drunken with the blood of saints, boast of her royal dignity and perpetual continuance. History has fully confirmed the truth of these solemn warnings of the Spirit of God. A prodigious system of mingled idolatry and persecution, veiled under Christian names, and advancing the loudest claims to perpetual submission and honour, but seated on the seven-hilled city of Rome, has cast its shadow over long ages of the Church's history, and, though weakened, survives and prospers to this very day.

These corruptions had reached their height, and threatened to stifle true Christian faith altogether, when the Reformation dawned on the Church of Christ. Then the Angel of the Covenant, like Moses returning from the mount, visited the Church once more, in anger against its gross idolatries, but in mercy and love to His true witnesses. The Word of God was opened once more before the eyes and the hearts of Christ's people, and a visible separation made between a heathenized, Pagan worship,

and the worship of God by one Mediator alone, in spirit and truth.

What, then, are the duties of the Christian Ruler, arising from this altered state of the Visible Church of Christ? Ought he to be a passive confederate in all the abuses that have defiled it? Ought he to stand aloof, and take no part in that work of spiritual reformation, which the Lord had announced long before by His prophets, and which His providence has fulfilled in the latter days? Or, having once taken part in the work, must he then abandon it to the chances of time, and to the fickle passions of men; and leave the spiritual temple of God, reared at such cost and pains in troublous times after a sore captivity, to sink once more into desolation and ruin?

These questions are soon answered, if the Word of God is to be our guide and standard. No church authority, no pretence of antiquity, no motives of policy, can excuse the ruler who links his kingdom with an idolatrous worship, or screens him from the just displeasure of a jealous God. The kings and nations, which partake in the sins of the New Testament Babylon, will receive also of her plagues. What is true of kings, is no less true of parliamentary majorities. Their pleas of policy, when they lead to a covenant with idolatry, will be chaff and stubble in that day, when idols shall be abolished, and the Lord shall arise in His majesty to strike terribly the earth.

But if the Ruler is guilty, who leagues himself with idolatry, and actively abets the usurpations of a corrupt priesthood, ought he to stand aloof, and wait with folded hands, till the Church from within shall reform its own

abuses? In a time of conflict, when the Spirit of God is raising up a strong protest against the sins of the Church and its rulers, such a neutral course is neither lawful nor possible. No prince or ruler, in the days of the Reformation, was able to pursue the pathway of a bare neutrality. They might as well abdicate at once, as refuse all cognizance of the great questions, which filled every heart, and occupied every tongue, and stirred the depths of the national heart and mind in almost every land. If they meddled with these questions at all, they must do it either as those who cared for the truth, or were wholly careless; as those who loved the Gospel, or who preferred the superstitions which corrupted and destroyed it; that is, either as Christians or as Infidels, either as Protestants or submissive disciples of Rome. They had to choose their part, either with Ahab and Manasseh, or Pilate and Gallio, or with David and Josiah; of whom the former offered largely and gladly to build the temple of God, and the latter purged it from all its idols, and held a national feast of repentance and faith to the God of Israel. At such a time, when the Spirit of God was working mightily around him, what upright, pious ruler could hesitate on the course he was bound to pursue?

Great wisdom, doubtless, is needed to guide such a royal and public reformation of the Church to a prosperous issue. All efforts of mere authority must be entirely in vain without some mighty working of the Spirit of God in the hearts of men. But there are duties which plainly belong to the Christian ruler, and have no slight moral power towards the attainment of the end he ought to keep in view. His eyes must be on the faithful of the

land. He will encourage those who obey the commands of their Lord, and discountenance those who teach the people to cleave to superstitious vanities. Like Josiah, he will strive to awaken the conscience of his people to the sense of their national sins, and will cause the Word of God, for this purpose, to be spread through the land. By the aid of his authority, wisely exercised, the sounder elements of the Church will gain strength to cast off the traditions by which they have been overlaid. Its inward life will then revive, and manifest itself in sound doctrine, moral discipline, and spiritual worship. As Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down, so the Christian ministry will be quickened and restored out of the ruins of a time of superstition. Zerubbabel, the prince, must work together with Joshua the priest, if the Church in any nation of Christendom, is to be rescued from Babylonish captivity, and a spiritual temple, free from all heathenish idolatry, is to be prepared for the exercise of a national worship, acceptable to God.

Some, however, admit that it was the duty of Christian Rulers to lend their aid to the work in that hour of Reformation; but advise them, at all other times, to observe a strict neutrality, and abstain entirely from meddling with religious affairs. But their view, though held by one or two honoured names, seems most inconsistent and untenable. Eminent faith and piety in rulers does not turn sins into duties, but simply enables them to fulfil those duties which really belonged to them before. If it were lawful and right, in those days, for Christian princes to help on a Reformation of the Church, it must be equally right that they should still consult for the

permanence, completeness, and spiritual efficiency of that Reformation. If now they ought to be passive spectators only, and sanction whatever Church rulers and synods may approve, they were bound to be passive in those earlier days, however powerful the excitement around them. If Christian rulers acted aright when they espoused the cause of the Reformation, their duty must still be the same—to consult at all times for the purity and life of the Church and the spiritual welfare of their people.

What, now, are those duties of the Ruler, which grow out of the past corruptions of the visible Church, and its partial reformation in former days? The first and chief is to be firmly rooted and grounded himself in the truth of God. A loose and slippery faith must leave him unfit to guide the policy of the State amidst the shoals and quicksands. He needs to have learned and felt, in his very heart, the intelligible clearness of the written Word, and the contrast between the true sayings of God and the glosses and traditions which have extensively obscured them from the eyes of superstitious men. His duty is to honour the Church for the truth's sake, instead of honouring falsehood, as men have often done, in deference to Church authority. Next, he must cherish the inner spiritual life of the Church itself. He cannot treat it as independent of all civil control without abdicating his own office; but he will give it, as Christ's ordinance, all the self-governing power which is consistent with his own obligations to God as the supreme ruler in Church and State, and with the general welfare of the whole nation. He will use his authority, to advance the most faithful servants of Christ to those stations, where their gifts may



be most effectually employed for the benefit of the Church at large. He will discourage, and in extreme cases may be bound to depose, the grossly unfaithful, the immoral and profane, the ignorant and superstitious, and covetous hirelings, and all who poison or neglect instead of tending and feeding the flock of Christ. He will neither practise himself, nor countenance in others, superstitious and idolatrous rites, plainly repugnant to the Word of God. But while he refuses the countenance of the State to doctrines and practices fundamentally opposed to the Gospel, and to the teachers who maintain them, he will be careful not to embarrass his sanction of Christian pastors in general by hard, burdensome, and doubtful conditions, which tend to create fresh divisions in the Church of Christ.

In aiming at this high standard, partial errors are likely to occur even in the case of the best and wisest rulers. But there is a wide contrast between such defects, when joined with an upright spirit and a loving heart, and the pride which delights in oppression and excuses itself by specious reasons and technical forms for crushing tender consciences and creating fatal schisms in the Church of Christ. The difference is just as great on the other side, between faithful protests against the partial injustice of rulers, made by those who suffer in meekness, and the clamorous outcry of self-willed spirits; of those who condemn the most virtuous princes and statesmen in their most upright efforts for the honour of Christ, because these efforts contradict a theory of their own, which they have rashly espoused, in direct opposition to sound reason and the deepest truths and plainest examples of the Word of God.

But the Reformation, in setting free large portions of the visible Church from the supremacy of the Roman see, has opened the way for new evils on the other side. The reformed Churches, and not least those of our own country, have been rent and torn by many schisms, which have divided Christians from each other. Hence further difficulties have arisen in the maintenance of any national profession of Christianity. How far is the duty of princes modified by these divisions? What course ought they to pursue amidst the confused strife of religious parties, for the glory of God and the true welfare of their people?

The difficulties arising from this source have been growing for two hundred years, and are deeply felt at our own day. The theory of entire separation between Church and State owes its chief popularity to this cause alone. Where there are in a country many religious sects and bodies of Christians, each claiming superior purity or truth, a national Church becomes, in the view of many, a direct nuisance and injustice, a perpetual source of religious jealousy and social discord. The State is perplexed, because the Church is hopelessly divided, and Christ's new commandment has been practically set aside. Such a condition of things calls for humility and confession of guilt, for shame and sorrow, from all earnest and pious Christians. How can truth be publicly honoured if rulers are only deafened by the war-cries of fifty creeds and religious parties, when they ought to hear from the whole Church one consenting witness to the supreme authority of Christ their Lord?

Here, again, ought the Christian rulers to stand aloof

and leave contending factions to exhaust themselves by their own warfare. Is he to receive all, without distinction, into favour, and welcome them alike to the bosom of the State? Or must he define the Church by the double mark of outward continuity in its clergy, and submission to his own will, and exclude all others, as wilful and guilty schismatics, from all notice except as offenders to be punished? Ought he not rather to search into the causes of these divisions—to heal, if possible, those which admit of healing—and where there is no hope of immediate cure to vary the degree of public help and favour according to the purity of doctrine, the effective discipline, the historical claims, and social abilities, which belong to these different parts of the visible Church of Christ?

The first course, of entire neglect, is sinful, dangerous, and practically impossible. It is sinful because the ruler thereby abdicates his office, which is the punishment of all evil-doers and the praise of all them that do well, and shows himself indifferent to the honour of Christ, whose minister he is and on whose grace his authority depends. It is dangerous because religious faction, left wholly without restraint, leads to violent convulsions and may imperil the peace and safety of the State. Nay, after a time, such forbearance is impossible. Soon or late, when the national interests are in jeopardy, rulers are compelled to interfere; and the longer their proper work has been neglected the harder it will be to resume their authority, and the more ignorant, blind, and rash, under the pressure of some political conspiracy, and guided by no other principle, the exercise of that authority is likely to be, so as only to double the evils it vainly attempts to cure.

The second course is hardly less dangerous to social peace, and still more dishonourable to the truth. The only principle which can warrant the ruler's interference in sacred things is then disowned. Blind to all the real merits of religious debates, he still claims to be their umpire. But such an umpire, like Chaos, 'by decision more embroils the fray.' The attempt blindly made to confound truth and error in vital questions is a fresh assault on the ark of God. The result will either be universal apathy, where no creed whatever is believed; or fresh and bitter conflict, with the ruler turned into the champion of that worst heresy, that all faith is only doubtful opinion, that no truth can be known, and that falsehood and truth are equally profitable to the souls of men.

One of the two last courses, then, must be pursued by the Christian ruler. These may melt into each other by a slight difference, or be wide asunder as the poles, as the spirit of the ruling powers is one of rash bigotry or of calm and thoughtful wisdom. The first is the idea which lies at the foundation of national churches, while they have been brought nearer to the other by later changes. These, however, have been the result of compromise or State necessities, rather than of clear, well-defined policy. And hence they are viewed, by a large class, as anomalies, and infractions of the true principle of Church and State; while others take them to be imperfect applications of a principle, which would abolish their union altogether, and replace it by the opposite maxim of entire neutrality.

The former view starts from the maxim that the Church of Christ is a visible institution, ordained by

Christ himself, to continue distinct and visible to the end of time. It assumes further that this church is defined by the presence and authority of church rulers, derived in unbroken succession from the Apostles themselves. It also assumes that the conjoint authority of the chief clergy and of the Christian king, is supreme and absolute in each land over the people of Christ, so that those who disown it, under whatever plea, are cut off from the Church, and cease wholly to be its members. They may still partake of Divine grace, but only by supernatural mercy, outside the revealed covenant of the Gospel. And hence it is inferred that the State cannot show any favour, hardly any tolerance, to such persons or communities, without treason against the just claims of the Church, and indifference to the revealed commands of Christ.

This theory of a Church State has some apparent advantages, which may commend it to some minds, not wholly given up to religious bigotry. It simplifies the definition of the Church, so that statesmen may grasp it more easily, and deal with it as with an army or navy, defined by their officers, ships, and uniforms, without entering on abstruse questions of theology. It seems also to set up a high standard of duty, for the obedience of the people to their lawful governors, and thus to be favourable to quietness and peace. It supersedes all difficult questions with regard to varying degrees of favour or countenance to differing religious bodies. The State Church defined as above, is alone to be patronized; and all dissidents of every name either actively persecuted, or at least depressed and discouraged, by all the influence of the civil power. The State then labours to spread the definite



creed under one definite organization, through the whole land.

But this view, however captivating by its simplicity, overlooks essential features of the problem which lies before rulers in these latter times of the Church's history. For our reasoning is not now with Romanists or semi-Romanists, who count the Reformation a wicked and senseless schism, but with those who own in it a signal work of the Spirit of God. We have to start from these admissions, that gross corruptions of faith and practice have prevailed widely for ages in the Visible Church; that large portions of the Church have cast the chief of them aside; that even in escaping from these evils, unity of discipline, and in part doctrine and mutual fellowship, have been impaired, and that different parts of the Church, though faithful in the main, are no longer in full communion with each other. Thus the inward life of the Church, and its outward unity and order, are more or less parted asunder. Any course of policy, then, which overlooks or denies this fact, involves a serious error, and the more consistently it is worked out, the more grievous and fatal are the results that must ensue.

The Visible Church is doubtless the ordinance of Christ. It ought to combine, with sound doctrine, faith, and holiness, an outward unity, under a succession of faithful pastors and governors, regularly set apart for their office, with whom all Christian people should remain united in obedience and mutual love. But the word of God gives us no assurance that this union would always last. Its prophecies warn us of the later separation of these elements, and history has confirmed their warnings.

Every Reformed Church, by its constitution, bears witness to their actual separation in Christendom, and to their possible separation within its own pale. Succession from the Apostles may be gloried in, and be the basis of Antichristian apostasy, when faith, the pure preaching of God's word, and the scriptural celebration of the sacraments, have almost wholly passed away.

Orderly succession, then, of the clergy, whether patriarchs, bishops, or presbyters, taken alone, is no sufficient mark of the Church, by which to define the policy of a Christian Ruler. And if not enough alone, it is not enough when his sanction is also given to confirm it. Those who hold most fully the duty of the ruler to interfere in religious questions, cannot hold, without evident folly, that his actual interference is sure to be just and wise. Some, like Uzziah, may intrude into a forbidden service. Others, like Ahaz, may replace God's ordinance by a heathenish form of worship. Others may even, like Manasseh, join the foulest idolatry with the worst persecution, fill their kingdom with innocent blood, and rear altars to saints and angels, and all the host of heaven.

But when, besides the union of royal and ecclesiastical authority, there is a general confession of sound doctrine, is not this enough to define the Visible Church? Must not every separation be then a wicked schism, deserving of censure alone, and calling for stern repression by the State? This may be called the Laudian and Stuart theory of a State Establishment. Not only sad experience, but reason alone, may prove that it involves a very serious error. The attempt to reduce it to practice cost our country a civil war, and the National Church a temporary

overthrow; while its principles, when developed, led the later Stuarts back to the Romish communion, and cost one of them his throne. Its most recent reviver has found it, as was almost self-evident, still more impracticable in these times; and has thus drifted away into the wake of the rival theory, which sets up religious neutrality for the true policy of our once Christian and Protestant empire. Extremes often meet. Over-doing is often the worst undoing. When the authority of rulers, either in Church or State, is strained beyond its due limits, a reaction is sure to set in. National policy, recoiling from an ideal found to be unattainable, may then sink to its lowest degradation, in which Christ and His truth are silently, but deliberately, thrust out from the councils of the State; and the public homage, once paid to the living God, is given to 'troops' and 'numbers,' arithmetical totals and electoral majorities alone.

Besides sound doctrine, some elements of discipline are almost essential to the being, and certainly to the well-being, of any portion of the visible Church. The zeal of party, it is true, may often have added human traditions and inventions to the Divine commands. But some commands do exist which are binding on the Church, though Christians may not fully agree on their precise nature and limits. Now if rulers contradict and set aside such laws of Christ, faithful Christians will be bound to dissent from their injunctions, and to obey their Lord rather than man. Again, a general confession of truth may be joined with secondary errors. This alone will not justify separation. But should these errors, or any one of them, be rigorously imposed on all the members of the Church, it

must be wrong for those who see the error to accept the yoke, and abide in such a communion. In either case, continued communion involves at least a sin of ignorance, and separation might become an imperative duty. Such a separation, however, would be made, not in vainglory or in pride, but with humility and caution, grieving over the evil, and desiring its cure, with earnest longing that the incubus may be removed, and Christ's truth purely maintained in the national profession.

A further case may be considered, when these evils do not exist, and no error is really imposed, and still many Christians believe one or both of them to have occurred. They conceive that some part of Christ's discipline, divinely ordained, has been set aside, and that harsh terms of communion have been imposed, to which they cannot assent without violence to their own convictions of truth. Does this exclude them wholly from the visible Church, and turn them into heathens and publicans, so that displeasure and punishment are all that they can expect from a wise and faithful ruler?'

The answer to this question, if we view it in the light of Scripture, ought not to be doubtful. Every false step, arising from religious ignorance and error, is a sin. Open separation of Christians, without sufficient cause, is a schism that rends the body of Christ. But the degree of guilt may vary most widely, from self-willed arrogance, and almost Satanic pride, to a slight defect of spiritual judgment; and even this, perhaps, united with a tender conscience, great sensitiveness to evils that dishonour Christ, and high measures of faith and holiness. When kings, who entered late into the Church, claim to be despots in all its

affairs ; when the terms of communion are multiplied and made rigorous through false and worldly notions of the unity of the Church ; when sameness of form is made the test and measure of oneness of spirit, and strained to the utmost limit that thoughtful minds can receive, such cases must arise, and in the days of the Restoration they actually arose. Separation from the national Church in such cases, though not strictly lawful, may leave faith and an upright conscience in vigorous exercise ; and is a far lighter defect, in God's sight, than many sins which reign unchastised, and almost unrebuked, in every part, reformed or unreformed, of the visible Church of Christ.

The sin of schism, in the early days of the Gospel, was like that of a soldier, who deserts well-tried and faithful officers on the battle-field in sight of the enemy. But in later times these features have changed. The great body of the Church, as all Protestant Christians will allow, has grievously corrupted the faith, and its spiritual guides have been chief in the trespass. The conflict is not more with outward heathenism than with paganism revived within the pale of the Church. Worldliness has infected both civil and ecclesiastical rulers, and made them often most unsafe guides for spiritual men. And thus the standard of union has been transferred, more and more, from the person of individual rulers to the public confession to which they profess to adhere. Here, also, different parts of the Church have laid a new yoke on the neck of disciples, burdensome to the weak, and sometimes even to the strong. All these changes tend to mitigate and excuse those separations, which were so hateful and inexcusable in early times. Causeless schism,



to the spiritual eye, is always an evil to be earnestly deplored. But the guilt is seldom confined to those who separate alone. A still greater evil is the censorious rashness, which confounds the scruples of pious Christians and really tender consciences with the stubbornness of self-will; and that abuse of authority, which turns the most thorny questions of theology or of Church order into binding laws of communion; till the faithful have their consciences harassed, almost with equal doubt, whether they yield to its requirements, or disobey them. Scarcely less mournful is the folly which confounds under a common term of reproach the widest moral extremes; and pronounces rash censure upon imperfect, but conscientious, enlightened, and holy men, which, like those of the friends of Job, will recoil on those who utter them, when the true Judge shall appear. How different would have been the history of our own Church and country, if all who have railed against Baxter, Howe, and Henry, and their compeers, as guilty and perverse schismatics, had attained one tithe of their faith, zeal, love to Christ, and deep spiritual wisdom!

The error, which defines the visible Church by external succession and legal uniformity alone, compels those who accept it to embrace one of two alternatives. They must either shut their eyes to the clearest marks of the blessing of Christ, and the presence of His Spirit, in those whom they exclude from the visible Church, and resign to uncovenanted mercies; or else maintain that our Lord, in fixing the bounds of His Church, attaches far less weight to faith, holiness, and sound doctrine, than to an implicit submission to the most doubtful commands of some par-

ticular set of rulers; and this too, when many others, holding the like office, are owned to have abused their power, and enforced the worst superstitions. One alternative sins against the Holy Spirit, whose work it vilifies or denies. The other dishonours our Lord himself, and makes Him reverse, in the constitution of the Church, some of the main doctrines and precepts of the Gospel.

The Christian Ruler, then, cannot simplify his task, and accept this definition of the Church, without error and sin. He would thus be a partner in all the evils it has caused, of division, strife, and censorious judgment, and only perpetuate and intensify the discord of the Christian people. The Church, when patronised on this narrow and artificial basis, will lose much of its moral power as a social instrument for the diffusion of Christian truth. Instead of a society, divinely ordained to promote 'glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men,' it will be liable to sink into a complex State engine, to enforce the adoption of some peculiar rites, or the verbal profession of some obscure and disputed doctrines. The apparent benefits will be lessened, and the causes of irritation increased, in the same proportion; and thus, in course of time, even the very foundations of national Christianity will be gradually and fatally undermined.

The Ruler, then, who would fulfil his office aright in a divided state of the visible Church must adopt a wiser and juster view. He must see that it embraces, in its widest sense, all who profess and call themselves Christians; but that within these limits it admits of the widest difference, as each part holds the faith more or less purely,

and attains more or less fully to the 'unity of the Spirit, the bond of peace, and righteousness of life.' His aim will be to judge every part with an equitable judgment in the light of God's word; and to mete out praise or censure, full or partial encouragement, bare permission, or needful restraint from the power of social mischief, in due proportion to the moral and spiritual characters which really exist. His chief duty will refer to that portion of the Church which is most closely linked with the State. His aim will be to increase its efficiency, and extend its power of moral benefit to all who receive its ministrations. He will encourage the most faithful and zealous of its clergy, and will also strive to remove any needless obstructions which haste or bigotry may have reared, so as to repel faithful men from its communion, and raise a wall of separation between those who might else labour unitedly, and thus with double efficiency, in the Lord's service. He will aid and encourage the Church, by wise self-government, to adjust itself to altered circumstances, and the real wants of the people; so as to remove the stumbling-blocks by which many pious men are hindered from joining it, without losing its hold on the eternal truths it is appointed to maintain, and which it is its unchangeable and solemn duty to apply in all their power to the consciences of men.

## CHAPTER V.

### ON RELIGIOUS NEUTRALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE.

THE laws of national duty now unfolded are no abstract theory. They are one main part of that law of eternal right, which is the foundation of the throne of God. Statesmen may transgress them, but cannot change them. They are the Divine key to the whole history of Israel, the chosen people, through fifteen centuries from Moses to Christ. The breach of them is the revealed cause of Israel's national ruin, which has lasted even down to the present day. As a nation, they stood by faith, and fell through unbelief. The same great laws of national duty, received by the early Church from prophets and apostles, prevailed, after a struggle of near three hundred years, over the proud and stubborn heathenism of the empire of Rome. Then began a second application of them, larger and nobler than the first, but equally clouded by great and serious evils, on which the whole history of Christ's Church through fifteen centuries, and the course of modern civilization, depends. Our own country, through a thousand years, from Alfred until now, has been raised to greatness as a Christian State, rendering public homage, however mingled and imperfect, to the risen Son of God. Faith in Christianity, and open honour to all the ordinances of

the Christian Church, has formed the ground-work of the British Constitution. And when, after corruptions as grievous as those under the kings of Israel, our own and other churches were rescued from their Babylonish captivity under a foreign yoke and a heathenized worship, new courses of truth were laid on the old foundation. Our Church became a Reformed Church, and our country a Protestant State ; while both were joined in one united and earnest testimony against the doctrinal errors and usurped supremacy of the Church of Rome. The Revolution, after the conflicts of four Stuart reigns, completed the building by the Protestant Succession, the Coronation Oath, and the Act of Toleration. But while the rights of conscience were the topstone of the building, the national profession of the Reformed faith, of God's truth revealed in the Scriptures, and sealed by the blood of apostles, martyrs, and reformers, a purified worship, and an open Bible, remained the fixed and settled basis of the national constitution.

After a hundred and eighty years, just half a prophetic time, the great principles of this Constitution are vigorously assailed, and a strong confederacy of diverse and opposite parties are bent on its speedy overthrow. Infidels, who despise the Gospel, and reject all revelation ; Romanists and Romanizers, who hate or despise the Reformation, and heap foul abuse on our own Reformers ; Nonconformists, who have cast aside, as a superstitious weakness, the views of their own founders, and denounce all union of Church and State as adulterous, immoral, and profane, are now reinforced by all those nominal Churchmen, who have more faith in the transitory currents of popular opinion than in the teaching of their own Church, the voice of all



Christian antiquity, and the plain and repeated testimonies of the Word of God. The Irish Church, the weakest and most vulnerable part of our National Establishment, is chosen for the first object of their campaign. This is the Lachish, which is the first hindrance to their further progress, and to which siege is now laid. But the final aim of the great Liberal movement is the entire overthrow of that National Reformed Church, which is now, and has been for three hundred years, the foremost witness for the Gospel of Christ on the face of the earth.

There are four main standards under which this assault is made, and of which the disciples, for the moment, are leagued together. The first is Social Justice, or the supposed obligation of Rulers of the State to observe a strict and absolute religious neutrality. The next is Ecclesiastical Liberty, or the right of the Church, in all its branches, to enjoy entire independence from the control of the civil power. The third is Popular Sovereignty, or the supreme and uncontrolled right of an electoral majority, now represented by seven-twelfths of the House of Commons, to absolve the Sovereign from the Coronation Oath, to reduce the Peers to a registration office, and pull down a Protestant, or set up a Papal Church, according to their own momentary will. The fourth and last is Irish Nationality, or more generally, the right of local majorities, reckoned by number alone, in some district or province of the empire, to mould the religious institutions of the empire among themselves according to their own local preferences and choice alone.

These maxims are the fashion of the hour. They are advanced in the speeches of statesmen, and re-echoed

in the daily and weekly press, as self-evident truths, which make further argument a waste of thought and time. They are used, for the moment, only to point the arrows against the Irish Church. But when traced to their logical and necessary results, they strike at the vitals of the British Constitution, and overturn all social morality and all religious faith. Let us submit them, one by one, to a patient examination.

Our Protestant Constitution is assailed, first of all, in the name of Social Justice. All favour, preference, or patronage to one creed, church, or party above others is affirmed to be an insult and injury to all the rest. For this reason all Protestant ascendancy, at least in Ireland, is henceforward to cease. It is an upas-tree, shedding baleful and poisonous influence on every side. Or else it is a barren fig-tree, and a voice has gone forth, though not yet from the Lord of the vineyard, at least from husbandmen who claim to dispose of His inheritance : — ‘Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?’

This ground of assault on the Irish and every other Establishment is the most decisive of all, if it can be sustained. But then its nature needs to be clearly defined. It is not the same with the right of majorities to mould the national policy after their own will, nor with the claim of local majorities to be supreme in their own sphere. It is a principle much wider and deeper in its application, and must cover the feeblest minority, as well as the largest and strongest majorities, with the ægis of its protecting shield. What is expedient may vary, with circumstances, from one province or kingdom to another, but the claims of justice admit of no such limitation. What is

justice in Ireland must be justice in England also. What is unjust to millions of Roman Catholics must be unjust to millions of Nonconformists, and unjust also to ten thousands of Jews or Infidels. An ascendancy which is only a poison-tree on one side of the Channel can never be a tree of life on the other. A question of abstract justice can never be turned into a matter of local geography. If a Protestant Establishment is a social injustice, to disestablish the Church in Ireland, and leave it established in England, must be at once a folly and a crime. In the name of equality it creates a flagrant inequality between two parts of the same empire, and in the name of justice it perpetuates what its own voice declares to be a public wrong.

In the name of justice, Protestant ascendancy, we are told, must cease in Ireland, and the Irish branch of the National Church be disestablished and disendowed. The same justice, then, must plainly require that Church ascendancy should cease in England, and the disestablishment be complete in both islands. And this, if the principle now examined be true, is not only just, but essential to the success of the change. So long as Protestant ascendancy lasts in Great Britain, the ruling part of the empire, it cannot cease in Ireland, or can cease only by its entire separation. Our Queen holds the throne under a law of Protestant succession. The Protestantism of her ancestors is the historical condition of her right to the crown. She has professed her adherence to the Protestant and Reformed Church by a solemn oath, and has sworn to maintain its rights and privileges, as by law established. The Sovereign is constitutional head of the

Church of England, and again the head of that Church is 'in all causes and over all persons within her dominions supreme.' While these laws continue, there can be no strict equality, in any part of the empire, between members of a Church so closely linked with the prerogatives of the Crown, the national life, and the whole growth of the constitution, and other religions, which are the object either of direct protest, or of simple tolerance, in these fundamental laws of the Legislature, the Church, and the Crown. And thus complete disestablishment of the Irish Church is impossible, unless the union of Irish and English Churchmen in creed and worship can be destroyed, or else the Coronation Oath is repealed, the Royal Supremacy blotted out from the creed of the Church, the rights of the Church itself abolished, and the Protestant Succession done away. Then, and not till then, the proposed work will be done, this upas-tree of Protestant ascendancy plucked up by the roots, and the confederates who are leagued for its destruction may rejoice that their triumph is complete.

But the principle of 'Social Justice' cannot stop even here. It must apply, not only to the relation between the State and various bodies of Christians, but between Christianity itself and other religions. Injustice does not cease to be a sin, because its object is a Jew, a Mahommedan, or a heathen. To do injustice to the weak may be less dangerous, but is even more odious, than to do the like injustice to the strong. The risk may be diminished, but in the same degree the cowardice and tyranny are increased. We can have no more right to injure and insult some thousands of Jews than some millions of Christians. The plea of justice, then, if it requires the Church to be dis-

established in Ireland, requires it to be disestablished everywhere, and so completely disestablished that no shred or patch of national faith may be left behind. The upas-tree of Protestant ascendancy must cease throughout the empire, and the upas-tree of Christian ascendancy must therefore cease also. In the name of social justice the cry must go up from every elector, from every constituency, from our own legislature, and from the sovereign people in every country, once Christian, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' No insult or injury must be offered any longer to philosophic Atheists, and not even one solitary national altar 'to the Unknown God' must be allowed to survive in the moral desolation.

But even this is not the furthest limit of the necessary consequences of this modern theory. If every falsehood in faith and practice, embraced by any number of citizens, has a just claim to equal favour or disfavour from the Ruler with the most vital truths, there is no ground of reason why the principle should be confined to religious truth and falsehood alone. The life is more than meat, and the body than raiment. A principle which applies to objects of supreme importance must apply no less to inferior things. The theory of protection and that of free trade, republicanism and monarchy, socialism and our Art. xxxviii., concubinage and marriage, when professed in theory or in practice by any number of subjects, must have a just claim to equal countenance from the Sovereign Power. All alike, in a favourite phrase of the day, ought to have 'a clear stage and no favour.' The consequence is plain. All the citizens of each country must be so united in judgment, so ripe and perfect in wisdom on all



religious and social questions, as to make government needless ; or else, by this modern theory, every act of government involves unavoidable insult, injury, and wrongdoing, towards those whose judgment is reversed and set aside.

Religious Neutrality, then, when traced to its logical and necessary result, leads direct to national ungodliness and social anarchy. But it is also self-contradictory and impossible. When all numbers have been made even by Act of Parliament, it may be possible to equalise all religious creeds and convictions, with the practices that flow from them, in the constitution of the land. Some principle or other, whether of faith or unbelief, of spiritual or formal religion, must form the groundwork of the national policy. The Ruler, in rejecting one, must adopt another. He who disestablishes a truth, whether he means it or not, establishes the opposite falsehood. There is no practical equality between those whose deepest convictions are cast aside, despised, and renounced, in the public counsels of the land, and those whose opinions are embodied, amidst the plaudits and hosannas of the multitude, in the national legislation. Wherever there is a National Christianity, unbelief is not on an equality with faith ; and where there is a deliberate national rejection of Christianity, and a refusal of all public homage to the Son of God, there faith is not on an equality with unbelief. In the clear noon-day of the Gospel, darkness can never be equal to light ; and light cannot be equal with darkness in the favour of the State and its Rulers, when men have grown incredulous of all religious truth, so that moral darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people.

Indeed the secret cause of this doctrine of State neutrality, and its wide acceptance, is the decay of deep religious convictions in the minds of men. There is in these days a widespread, practical Atheism, utterly unconscious of its own real nature. Christian faith becomes so feeble that it seeks refuge in closets, and can hardly face the light of day. Its speech whispers out of the dust, and can hardly be heard amidst the clamour of party strife in the high places of the land. If there is indeed a living God, the Maker and Judge of all men, then it is the first and chief duty of nations, parliaments, and kings to do Him public homage. If the Son of God has come down from heaven to ransom all men by His own precious blood, then it is the first duty of every one, high and low, rich and poor, statesman and peasant, to live not to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again. If all power belongs to Him in heaven and earth, all who have power on earth are bound to listen to His words, and obey His voice, on whose will their own authority depends. If the Scriptures are the Word of God, those to whom they are sent are bound to receive them with reverence, and to embody their great laws of duty in their own legislation. The Atheist who says plainly, There is no God, is far more consistent than the Christian who professes to believe that He is, and has revealed His will to mankind; and then undertakes to govern an empire on the plan of leaving it an open question whether there is a God or no, whether the Bible is truly His word, or only a heap of uncertain legends.

But leaving these extreme cases, let us test the theory more fully in its relation to the actual controversy of the

present day. Protestant ascendancy is to cease at once, at least in Ireland, though in Great Britain this upas-tree still continues the very basis of the constitution of the legislature, and the succession to the throne. The two creeds and churches are to stand precisely on a level, and by this means all insult and injury to the Roman Catholics of Ireland is to cease.

Now it is true that all men have human rights in which they are equal, and which are not dependent on their religious faith. Their life is fenced from violence by the same Divine law, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed;' and their property by the simpler prohibition of the Decalogue, 'Thou shalt not steal,' and by human laws, echoing the voice of the Supreme Law-giver. But equality of religions in the eye of the law is wholly different from the equality of persons in many rights, irrespective of their religion. It must consist either in equal honour, or in impartial contempt or indifference. But how can equal honour be given to the creed which places the Queen in authority above the Pope, and that which places the Pope above the Queen; to one which gives the people an open Bible, and one which locks it up in priestly hands, to one which provides worship in a known, and one which permits it only in an unknown tongue? How can a spiritual religion, which makes salvation depend on faith, hope, and love, the inward affections of the heart, be made equal to one which sends murderers to their account, denying their crime, and glorying in their innocence, when they have received absolution from a priest, after making him the safe depository of their crimes? How can any constitution do equal

honour to the doctrine which denounces a lie, and to the lie which it denounces, to the Church which condemns certain rites as idolatry, and one which makes those same rites the terms of salvation; to the Prayer-book which styles the worship of the host 'idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians,' and to the Church of the mass book, which makes that worship the climax and keystone of its whole religious system?

Religious equality, then, in the sense of equal honour to rival creeds, and churches mutually condemned, is impossible and absurd. No child can pay equal honour to his father and his father's murderer, to his mother and her open slanderer. If our own Church, in its Articles and Homilies, is a true witness, then all patronage of the Church of Rome by the State is the patronage of idolatry and superstition, of blood-guiltiness, falsehood, and persecution. If the Church of Rome is the Catholic Church, and all beside is fatal heresy; if the Bishop of Rome is the Vicar of Christ, and the decrees of the Council of Trent are the voice of the Spirit; then our national history for three centuries is one of deadly sin, and all the honour now paid to an heretical Church, its creed and its clergy, is a guilty rebellion against the King of kings. Here, then, religious equality, in the sense of equal honour, is impossible. On whatever side the truth may be in this great controversy, it is not only dishonoured, but renounced and denied, by all direct favour and encouragement shown to the opposite lie. The words of our Lord Himself find in all such cases their true and clear fulfilment: 'He that is not for Me, is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad.'

Religious equality, therefore, if attainable at all in such cases, can be reached only in the opposite way. A new constitution may be framed, based on equal, impartial contempt for the Articles and the Council of Trent, for the Church of England, and the Church of Rome. Under the heathen empire, as Gibbon tells us in his sarcastic style, ‘the various forms of worship were considered, by the people as equally true, by the philosopher as equally false, and by the magistrate as equally useful.’ The standard of modern liberal policy oscillates uneasily between the second and third of these varieties of heathen thought. In some the heathen magistrate predominates, in others the Stoic or Epicurean philosopher. The first would level upward, the second prefer to level downward. The contempt in one case is open, in the other thinly disguised. But the secret root is the same. When zero is the multiplier, numbers widely different have the same product. Contradictory creeds and worship can thus be made equal before the eye of the law in one way alone, by being equally despised. The policy has an early precedent; when persecuting Jews and Heaven’s most honoured messenger were both driven away with scorn from the judgment-seat of a Roman epicure, ‘and Gallio cared for none of these things.’

But when this stage is reached, and statesmen establish or disestablish, endow or disendow, all Christian churches and creeds alike, because all are equally despised, we have by no means reached that perfect religious neutrality which the theory demands. For this rejection of all national faith and worship is an open triumph of unbelief. Christianity has no sooner been dethroned,



than the Positive Philosophy is enthroned in its stead. The public policy is now based on the maxim that all religious faith is doubtful and obscure, and that to live and labour for this life alone is man's highest wisdom. The nation enters on an experience like that of Cain, when driven from God's presence — 'that will not look beyond the tomb, and cannot hope for rest before.' Zeal for God, and faith in Christ, in all their forms, good or evil, pure or impure, are discouraged and disestablished, and can no longer find any place in the councils of the land. What must succeed in their stead? The calm, placid, corpse-like unbelief of neutralised statesmen, with whom all religious creeds are various forms of childish superstition, which the world has nearly out-grown, and with whom Christ and his Apostles are old Jew lights that are fast dying away. A national creed and policy, which reflects the teaching of the Positive Philosophy, that whether there is a God must always be uncertain, and is a trifle which happily it does not concern any one to know. In short, a deliberate aim, on the part of the nations which had once received the Gospel, to thrust out every religious truth from their public counsels, to free themselves wholly from the yoke of Christ, and to banish the King of nations wholly from the government of the world He has made.

Religious neutrality, then, as the key of a national policy, is not only irreligious and immoral, but impracticable. The nearest approach to it which is possible is when unbelief is publicly enthroned and canonised on the ruin of every form of religious faith. But its claim to

superior justice is also an illusion, which a little calm thought will clear away.

Justice may be defined briefly, in the words of the Apostle, rendering to all what is their due. We may inquire what it means in reference to doctrines, to creeds, and to persons, and also as the human reflection and image of a glorious attribute of the Most High.

And first, what is really due to every different form of religious faith and practice? Are religious rites all worthy of the same approval, because all exist? and all truths or falsehoods worthy of the same honour, because they are actually believed? No advocate of religious neutrality and equality, however earnest and zealous, maintains this view. In England its chief disciples are the Dissenters, and most of them still retain, from their Puritan forefathers, a strong aversion to Romanism as a false and dangerous creed, though the views of national duty held by those forefathers have been reversed and set aside. The question of establishments is silently shifted from the ground of justice to creeds as creeds, and transferred to that of equal rights for those who profess them. Now if the only office of the ruler is to punish murders and open thefts, and a few other crimes, when they come to the birth, and to leave all the moral causes from which they are bred, ignorance and vice, without check, restraint, or healing medicine, the view would so far be consistent. Religious equality would be a false name, but the true law of duty would be simply a strict equality of civil punishment for crime, with no reference to religion whatever. But the moment rulers go further, and count it one main part of

their duty to hinder the growth of crime, to staunch the moral diseases that abound, and to raise the moral standard of their people, the theory breaks down, and becomes absurd. Truths can be taught only by those who believe them. Wholesome doctrine alone can have a wholesome effect, when taught either with or without the sanction of the State. A worship which God condemns can never secure His blessing. A creed, which paralyzes the conscience, can never promote the peace and moral welfare of the nation.

The first essential of justice, then, is to discriminate, and to discriminate wisely, between truth and falsehood; between doctrines that are wholesome and those which are pernicious; between those which are trivial, or at most secondary, and those which are vital to the moral welfare of the souls of men. Its foundation is knowledge of the truth. Blind men cannot judge of colours, nor deaf men of sounds. It is unjust to shew the same favour to idolatry as to pure and spiritual worship; to a doctrine which debases man, and stupifies the conscience, as to one which humbles him only to exalt, and quickens the conscience of right and wrong, while it gives hope and freedom to the spirit. It is unjust, politically, to count allegiance to a foreign bishop equal faithfulness to the state as allegiance to the crown, or compulsory confession to an unmarried clergy equally favourable to the peace and purity of domestic life as confession to Christ and God alone. If it be justice to give Judas the same honour as St. Paul or St. John, then it may be just to place the grossest superstitions, and the worst corruptions of the faith, on the same level of political favour and

national honour with pure, faithful, and consistent teaching of Christian truth.

From the religious doctrines and practices themselves we turn to persons. Does justice require us, where different creeds are professed, to treat all with equal public favour? The maxim, if sound, must apply to all opinions, and not to religious matters alone. But no one dreams of acting upon it in other things. Equal rights of all citizens are never held to mean that all, however opposite in views, character, and opinions, have an equal claim to posts and offices of every kind. We do not appoint blind men to be railway pointsmen, nor deaf men to be lecturers in elocution, or conductors of musical concerts. We do not count it just to avowed republicans to give them an equal share in trusts under the Crown, nor to choose socialists for the seats of justice, to administer the laws of property. We do not elect Ptolemaists, if such there are, to be astronomical professors, nor divide the financial years into months of protection and free trade, according to the number of protectionists and free traders, deduced from statistical inquiry. Social, political, moral opinions, in multiplied conflict with each other, can never take turns, in proportion to the numbers who receive them, in the public policy of the State. The attempt to secure impartiality in such a way would be lunacy and madness.

Now what is plainly true in all other subjects must be true in religious questions also. The only explanation of the contrast many propose to establish is the decay of religious faith. Dead opinions may be halved and quartered, sawn into pieces, and divided by rules of



statistics, without very serious loss, but it is not so with a true and living faith. The mother of the living child would not consent to the mock justice of Solomon's first proposal, for her bowels yearned over her son. It was no impartial justice to give her half a corpse, because her claim was disputed plausibly by her rival, instead of awarding to her the living child. The doctrine which proclaims the duty of religious equality, because truth in religious questions cannot be certainly discovered, could not have a more striking parable to enforce its real injustice and utter folly. True Christian faith can never be satisfied with a blindfold policy, which would split the difference between all religious creeds by allowing each an equal chance of being right, and uses the sword of justice to carve out for each an equal share of countenance and favour. Such a policy sacrifices the reality of justice to a worthless shadow. It commits murder on the living truth; and then provides, from the proceeds of the murder, worthless bribes for those whose guilty falsehood and jealousy has turned the sword of public justice into the instrument of a cruel and aggravated crime.

It is a serious evil, when those who profess and call themselves Christians dwell only on the questions in which they differ, and forget how many truths there are in which they still agree. Religious bigotry revolts and perplexes thoughtful statesmen, who have to deal with no abstractions, but the actual state of the Church and the world. Truth and falsehood never meet us in this life, pure and alone. The best, wisest, and holiest Christians see through a glass darkly, and some human error still mingles with their views of the things of God. The



most superstitious, and with few exceptions, even the most lax and sceptical, retain some elements of religious truth. The purest parts of the visible Church abound in practical evils, and fall very short of perfection; and the most impure contain still so much truth, that humble hearts may feed on it secretly, injured but not poisoned by the falsehoods that are mixed with it, and thus find the way of peace. But these admissions, though practically of great importance, do not affect the principle on which the controversy depends. For this admits no question of degree, and makes the mere existence of opinions and creeds, however false, their warrant for equal favour from the State with the most vital truths; or else, to avoid all favour to them, requires that no religious truth whatever should be recognised and retained. This doctrine, however many pious men may have been deceived by it, and however the holy name of justice may be applied to it, is nothing else than infidelity under a thin disguise. For it really teaches that the rulers of the State do wrong in publicly worshipping God, while there is one Atheist who denies and blasphemes Him, or in submitting to the authority of Christ, while the land contains one Jew or infidel, who counts Him a deceiver; that they can accept no law of morality while there is one Socialist or disciple of free love, or honourable duellist, who deliberately sets it aside; and that they are bound, in their public policy, to put out the eyes of the soul, and act as those who are wholly blind to all religious truth whatever, so long as positive philosophers exist, who count all faith in unseen things the mere childishness of decaying superstition. Such a

state forfeits the first and simplest conditions of real justice, the faculty of moral discrimination. It walks in darkness, and cannot see whither its policy tends. It is a modern Elymas, smitten with mist and darkness by its own contempt for God's truth, and it goes about, groping vainly for some one to take it by the hand.

But this claim of justice, now advanced in favour of the policy which sets aside all ascendancy of truth over falsehood, and professes to be strictly neutral amidst a score of sects, parties, and creeds, is not only most unreasonable and self-contradictory. It is a direct breach of the third commandment, and takes the name of the Holy One in vain. For justice is a Divine attribute, one of the noblest perfections of the Most High. All human justice is only a reflection or faint echo of that light of eternal righteousness, that voice of equity and truth, which are seen and heard, in their full perfection, in the upper sanctuary, where God reveals Himself to the spirits that surround His throne.

How, then, is it with that essential justice of the moral Governor of the world, of which all earthly justice is only the feeble and imperfect shadow? Does God, in His dealing with sinful men, take no account of their faith, and esteem it as a matter of pure indifference? Does He weigh out His favour, in an even balance, to the belief of His own truth, and of the various delusions of the enemy of souls, to a pure worship and the worship of idols, to those who obey the words of God and those who make His commands of no effect by the traditions of men? The whole teaching of our Lord and his Apostles, the whole history of the Bible from

Paradise to Patmos, is one loud and continual protest against so preposterous an assertion. Faith in God and His truth is there revealed to be the source of every virtue, and unbelief the fertile parent of every vice and crime. By unbelief sin and death entered into the world. A false and self-righteous worship prepared the way for the first murder, and brought down upon the murderer the curse of God. By faith Noah and his family were saved, when the flood came upon the world of the ungodly through their unbelief of the Divine warning. By faith Abraham became the heir of great and precious promises; and by unbelief Esau, as profane, was thrust out from the inheritance of blessing. By faith Moses and the Israelites were delivered; and through unbelief the Egyptians were smitten with plagues, and Pharaoh and his host perished in the waters. By unbelief a whole generation fell in the wilderness, and by faith their children crossed over Jordan into the land of promise. Heathen idolatry, admitted and practised by the chosen people, brought on them every successive judgment in the days of the judges and of the later kings; and the conquests of David, the early glory of Solomon, the deliverance under Hezekiah, the reprieve of judgment under Josiah, were all due to acts of faith and repentance, and to the public reformation of idolatrous abuses, on the part of pious kings. The ungodly pride and idolatry of Belshazzar and his nobles brought the sentence upon Babylon,—‘God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it;’ and the triumphs of Cyrus were linked with his public confession of willing obedience to a Divine prophecy, and the open declaration that it was the Lord

God of heaven who had given to him all the kingdoms of the earth, and a charge to build the temple in Jerusalem.

That policy, then, of strict religious neutrality between all forms of faith and worship, from the best and purest to the worst and most corrupt, which our modern liberal statesmen now commend and enforce in the sacred name of justice, receives throughout the word of God a very different name. It is there made the type of moral blindness, of triumphant unbelief, whether on the part of rulers or people. The voice of God's eternal justice sounds full and clear over every nation where an idolatrous worship prevails, however specious pleas by which it may be excused. 'Their land is full of idols, they worship that which their own fingers have made. And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself; therefore forgive them not.' Its voice of rebuke is hardly less stern against the pretended neutrals, who make all creeds and forms of worship go shares or take turns in their impartial patronage. 'How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.' The Laodicean Church receives the same rebuke from the lips of the Lord himself: 'I would thou wert either cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold or hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.'

Is justice, then, in the lips of our statesmen, to mean the exact reverse of what it means in the lips of all the messengers of God? Is it to consist in putting asunder what He has joined inseparably together, right faith and moral goodness, the right use of the present life and the

hopes of the life to come? Is it justice, in statesmen, to reverse the laws of God, to read backward the lessons of national duty He has been teaching the world by His prophets for thousands of years, to confound all difference where He proclaims an eternal contrast, to equalise, where His perfect wisdom proclaims an immense inequality; and to make religious indifference, and unconcern for all modes of faith and kinds of worship, the standard of duty for parliaments and rulers; when, without deep repentance, it will leave every one of them condemned and speechless before the solemn judgment-seat of the righteous King?

The cry of justice, then, which has been raised so loudly in favour of the policy which would enthrone religious neutrality in the counsels of our empire, is itself a sacrilege and a profanation. It was the sin of Israel in the wilderness that they changed their glory into the similitude of a calf that eateth hay. And surely the guilt is much the same, when justice, one of the noblest perfections of the Most High, whose seat is the bosom of God, and whose voice is the harmony of the moral universe, is so degraded by faction and party, by worldliness and unbelief, as to be boldly and loudly claimed for that doctrine of 'religious equality' which makes it the duty of rulers to halt between God and Baal, to put Christ on a level with Belial or with Antichrist; to own no faith, to practise no worship, and, in all their public acts, to shut out the living God from the government of His own world.



## CHAPTER VI.

## ON ECCLESIASTICAL INDEPENDENCE.

THE Freedom of the Church is a second standard under which the assault against the Irish Church, and all other establishments or State churches, is now carried on. To religious minds it is more seductive than the cold, heartless theory of State Neutrality, while to many politicians it occasions their chief suspicion and fear of the political change now proposed. It has thrown the moral weight of Scotland, side by side with Irish Romanists, and English Infidels and Nonconformists, into the scale of ecclesiastical revolution. It well deserves, then, a calm and patient examination.

The view of Scotch Free Churchmen, shared by many High Churchmen and Roman Catholics, and some Dissenters, is of this kind. Our Lord has ordained officers in the Visible Church, and laws by which they are bound to govern. His sole headship requires that no foreign authority should interfere, but all church questions be decided by church rulers alone. The Civil Magistrate, indeed, ought to honour and protect the Church, and give it favour and countenance; but all exercise of authority in its affairs is an offence nearly allied to sacrilege. The

Church may lawfully accept civil endowments, but cannot, without sin, be restrained or regulated by the Civil Power.

The doctrine has been stated by its advocates in these words : ‘ The Lord Jesus Christ is King and Head of the Church, and hath therein appointed a government in the hands of church-officers, distinct from the civil magistrate, and in all matters touching the doctrine, government and discipline of the Church, her judications possess an exclusive jurisdiction, founded on the word of God.’ The testimony to this exclusive jurisdiction of church-officers is called ‘ a testimony to Christ’s kingdom and crown.’ A distinction is then drawn to meet the objection that kings and princes also are the servants of Christ; that they are His servants, as God, in the universal kingdom of creation; but not as Mediator, in His spiritual kingdom of grace. The Church is founded in grace, but civil magistracy in nature alone.

In these views there is a great anomaly, which must strike any thoughtful mind at the first glance. The fulfilment of duty, in other cases, is attended by the increase of privilege. Now the presence and growth of the Church in any land must impose on the civil ruler onerous and difficult duties. But the result, by this theory, is to narrow his jurisdiction, and to exempt many or even all his subjects, in the most weighty and important sphere of their activity, from his interference or control. While his task is made doubly arduous, his rights are lessened, and his authority diminished. There seems nothing equitable towards the rulers of the State in such a theory. It would be far simpler to absolve magistrates from all

duties towards the Church, if their authority is to be wholly null and void in all Church affairs. For duty and privilege are correlative, and ought surely to grow and increase together.

It is doubtless a gross abuse, when civil rulers usurp uncontrolled and absolute power over any part of the Church of Christ. They were late disciples, after centuries of persecution, and this ought to suggest reserve and modesty in their claims. When this evil reaches its height, through the decay of faith, and the growth of legal formalism, the Church dies, and a secular apostasy, a State engine, is all that is left behind. There is much excuse for even excessive jealousy and watchfulness in religious men, in the presence of a danger so real. They justly hold that the Christian Church is no mere lump of clay, to be moulded by kings or parliaments into what shape they please; but a Divine ordinance, a corporation whose charter has the sign manual of the King of Heaven; so that the claim of any secular power to absolute control over its doctrines, laws, and worship, is an abomination of desolation, set up within the temple of the living God.

Two main objections lie against this doctrine of the spiritual independence of the Church, however real that danger of State Establishments, which has secured for it the favour and advocacy of many pious and able men. It restricts the character of spiritual persons to Church rulers only, making them the sole ministers of Christ in the kingdom of grace, and thus draws a stronger contrast than either reason or Scripture will allow between the sacredness of the prince's and the pastor's office. Zerub-

babel and Joshua may not be placed so wide apart from each other. And next, it confounds the essential laws of the Church with those variable bye-laws, whereby it needs to adapt itself, in different countries and successive ages, to the mutable states and aspects of human society. Spiritual independence, its resulting watchword, is a term which wears jealousy and discord written on its face. Mutual interdependence is the only true and right relation, implied in the whole tenour of God's own history of the world, between the Church of Christ and those rulers who are just and upright, ruling in the fear of God.

Church rulers, first of all, are not the only persons through whom their Lord exercises His own supreme dominion. He who gave 'apostles and prophets, pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ,' has also ordained civil magistrates, 'the powers that be,' to execute justice in His name. He who sits as priest on His throne is the source alike of both forms of derived authority. He is the Wisdom of God, by whom not only pastors teach, but 'kings reign, and princes decree justice.' And thus the Christian Prince, when he rises to the true conception of his office, not less truly than the Christian pastor, is a spiritual person. His authority, once baptized anew by faith in Him who bestows it, has God for its Author, Christ for its Head, and for its double object and aim, the glory of God and Christ, and the highest welfare of multitudes of redeemed men.

Again, the contrast, so sharply drawn between the service of Christ as God, in the kingdom of nature, and as Mediator in the kingdom of grace, is illusive and untrue.

For the whole course of Divine government from the days of Paradise, and still more plainly ever since the covenant of Noah, when seen in the light of Scripture, belongs to one grand economy of redeeming grace. Wherever there is forbearance to the guilty, and kindness and favour to sinful men, the great sacrifice of the cross is implied, and the Divine mediation of the Son of God. The words of our Lord after his Ascension, and the sayings of his Apostles, plainly affirm the same truth with regard to all later ages of the world's history. (Matt. xxviii. 18-20; Rom. xiv. 9; Phil. ii. 8-11; Rev. i. 5.) A race of sinners, apart from all grace and mediation, would have ceased long ago under the stroke of Divine judgment; and it is the great Mediator who has upborne from the first, and still upbears, the pillars of our sinful world.

Righteous judgment, also, the proper work of the Civil Ruler, is not wholly foreign from the Church of Christ. The Gospel, indeed, creates a higher moral standard than can exist among mere heathens, and reveals deeper varieties of well-doing and ill-doing. With these new problems the Ruler, while a heathen or unbeliever, is unfit to deal. The restriction, however, does not depend on God's definition of his office, but on his moral unfitness alone. The power of government, when the people become Christians, and the Ruler remains unbelieving, must tend to pass from him into other hands. An Apostle has told us that even the meanest believer ought to be more fit to decide controversies between his fellow-Christians, than any heathen magistrate, king, or emperor. To such an one all the weightiest questions of God's law and gospel may seem to be only 'questions of



words and names,' and his instinct will be, like Gallio, to drive them with contempt from his judgment-seat. Thus his unbelief condemns him to become gradually a moral cipher, destitute of real authority, or else an active persecutor of the faithful. But his moral blindness alone, and no contrast between two kingdoms of nature and of grace, deprives him of all moral right to govern within the Church of God.

This doctrine of spiritual independence involves also a broader contrast between things civil and sacred than can be held without serious error. All things are sacred in the eyes of faith; they proceed from God as their first cause, and His glory is their final and highest end. To the unbeliever nothing is sacred. Religion itself, in his eyes, is a mere State engine, creeds are popular prejudices, the worship of God a useless form, and all hopes of the life to come the dreams of superstition. The limit varies between these extremes with every degree of light or darkness in the minds of men. Mere infants in Christian knowledge and insight may accept a few main doctrines and simple acts of worship for the whole sphere of religion, and resign all beside to worldly philosophy, and the sway of mere secular interests and passions. But as Christians attain a riper faith, the contrast melts away and disappears, and they begin to enter into the meaning of the song of the seraphim, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.' The two elements, like the convex and concave in the same curve, are distinguishable in thought, but in fact inseparable. Thus the two forms of civil and ecclesiastical authority must of necessity overlap and inter-

fere. Church rulers ought to exercise a most powerful influence, as guides and advisers, in all the councils of the State, and to leaven them with eternal truth and righteousness. The Civil Magistrate, on the other hand, is bound to repress all things evil, and encourage all things good and holy, even within the sacred enclosure of the Church of God.

There is also a distinction of great importance between the essential elements of the Church, and the variable accidents which may attend them, and give them some especial form. The first depend on the direct appointment of Christ; but others proceed, indirectly, from the wisdom He may give His servants to meet the wants of each successive age. Rulers who transgress the first are guilty of direct sin against the Lord, whose servants and ministers they are. When they modify variable elements of Church order, they may be wise or unwise, despots or nursing fathers, but they do not openly transgress the bounds of their own authority. The same distinction applies, when Church and State Rulers disagree. The decision on either side may be unwise and mischievous, but there is no strict usurpation, till some essential ordinance of Christ is reversed and set aside. All the variable elements of the Church affect its prosperity, and thus come plainly within the natural province of ecclesiastical rulers. But they have also an important bearing on the welfare of society, the happiness of men, and the glory of the Prince of princes, and therefore come within the natural range, also, of the authority of the Civil Ruler. There must thus be some risk of collision, unless the rulers both in Church and in State were perfect; or we

should enthrone at once a secular or an ecclesiastical tyrant, a Nebuchadnezzar or a Hildebrand; or replace them both, under the plea of the rights of conscience, by the wild anarchy of mere selfwill.

The true relation, then, between Church and State, is neither one of absolute patronage and rule, and blind servility, nor yet of ecclesiastical independence, with an obligation of the rulers to pay the rulers of the Church all deference and honour, and yield them, within the Church, a sole and undivided authority. It is the interdependence of two closely related and co-ordinate powers, each appointed by Christ, and subject to His final judgment; and, until that decision is given, trebly limited by the rights of private liberty, their own mutual claims, and the supreme authority of the Word of God. When the Church is idolatrous and grossly corrupt, the Ruler is solemnly bound, like Josiah, to cleanse it from its idols and grind them into dust. When kings, like Uzziah, intrude into sacred offices, or, like Joash, set up idol-worship, and trench on fundamental laws of Christ's Church, then prophets, priests, and pastors are bound to resist the royal usurpation, whether the result shall be that the offender submits to the hand of God, or that God's witnesses are put to death in the courts of His temple. When a special compact has been made, each party may claim its fulfilment. When upright and earnest men differ as to its meaning, it needs to be renewed and revised under the double light of the Word of God and the lessons of experience. The harmony of God's double ordinance ought to be maintained at any sacrifice, short of plain duty and of truth clearly revealed. But when

the Church and its rulers are idolatrous, heretical, and self-willed, or civil rulers faithless and profane, the evil may be too deep for cure. The foundations are then assailed, and the faithful may have to bear witness in sackcloth; while they wait in hope for brighter days, and the full triumph of the kingdom of truth and righteousness.

A different and almost an opposite view is maintained, with great ability and greater confidence, in the posthumous 'Church Principles' of Dr. Cunningham, lately published. His arguments have the moral weight due to their wide and general acceptance among the Scotch Free Churchmen. They claim, therefore, some further examination.

The main doctrines, on which this able writer rests the Church's indefeasible claim to entire independence of the Civil Power, are these: First, not only the doctrine, but the whole form and rules of government of the Visible Church for all ages, are clearly defined in the New Testament. Secondly, in this code no place is given to Civil Rulers, but the government is committed to Church officers alone. Thirdly, the Christians in any kingdom have a right to combine in a local national Church, co-extensive with the province or kingdom, bound by the same code as the Church Catholic of which they are a part, but independent of its other branches, and under common ecclesiastical control. Fourthly, the right of Church rulers, in such a national Church, to sole jurisdiction in all Church affairs, is wholly unaltered by the entrance of the Civil Ruler into the Church of Christ. Fifthly, the contrast between the Church and the king-

doms of this world is a fundamental ordinance of Christ, and does not result from the sin and unbelief of earthly princes and their people. Lastly, the interferences of the kings of Judah in sacred things are 'manifestly occasional, isolated, and peculiar, and may be explained by the principle that they took place under special Divine guidance, not in the exercise of the ordinary right of sovereignty, and are to be referred rather to the prophetic than the kingly office.' All these main pillars of the arguments, I believe, without one exception, are unscriptural and untrue.

First, are the laws of the government of the Church Catholic so plainly defined in the New Testament as to form a complete code? The answer is surely plain to every candid mind. The questions of Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, and Independence, whatever preponderance there may be on one side or another, have been variously answered, for centuries, not by rash and ignorant, but by grave, conscientious, truth-seeking Christians. The evidence on these secondary questions of Church order is so constructive, so mixed up with historical traditions, that help to explain it, so perplexed by changes in the use of terms, that honest minds may come, and have come, to different conclusions, without any flagrant and conscious wresting of the Word of God. The duties assigned to Timothy and Titus, and the mention of the seven angels of the Churches, seem to prove an actual distinction between presiding bishops and elders in general, though the two words in the Acts and Epistles are as plainly convertible and equivalent. But while the early distinction, as a fact, seems plain, it is hard to find a single text that



can define its nature, or to prove that specific powers were assigned from the first to each office, order, or title of honour. Some great principles are laid down, that pastors are Christ's appointment, that they ought to be faithful men, and have certain moral qualifications; that the people of Christ should obey those that have the rule over them, and esteem them highly for their work's sake, and that all things should be done decently, and in order. But there are scarcely any details supplied which can form a definite code; and canon laws have their ground, almost entirely, in lessons of general expedience, and the gradual growth of usage and tradition.

Next, does this code, whether it is more or less complete and definite, plainly exclude civil rulers from all authority within the Church of Christ? On the contrary, it plainly includes them, and does not define the exact limit where the duty of submission ends. No precept of submission to bishops, presbyters, or deacons, occurs in St. Paul's earlier Epistles; and in all of them, excluding the pastoral letters, the word *elder* never occurs, the word *bishop* once only, *deacon* once only in its modern and narrower sense, but fifteen times more generally. It is applied once to Christ himself, six times to the Apostle, twice to civil rulers, four times to evangelists, once to a deaconess, and once to false teachers. The well-known passage (Rom. xiii.), 'Let every soul be subject to the higher powers,' where civil rulers are meant, is the first charge of submission to any class of superiors, given by the Apostle to the Church of Christ.

The Pastoral Epistles are our chief warrant for Divine rules of church order. And here the very earliest in-

struction, placed 'first of all,' is the charge to intercede and pray 'for kings and for all who are in authority,' because of the direct bearing of their conduct on the peace, godliness, and honesty of life, of all professing Christians. The duty of honour and obedience, even to heathen monarchs, here takes precedence of all directions about bishops or presbyters, and deacons, and all the internal bye-laws and regulations of the Church. St. Peter's command, again, to submit to the king 'as supreme,' stands early in his first epistle, taking the lead of all social or ecclesiastical duties, and the instruction to the younger to submit to the elders comes later at the close. In the parting visions of the Apocalypse our Lord is seen holding the seven stars in His right hand; but not until Civil Power has first received a fresh consecration in the title by which He is addressed in a sublime act of adoration,—'Jesus Christ, the Prince of the kings of the earth.'

Thirdly, the right of all the Christians in some one kingdom, nation, or province, to form themselves into one corporate Church, independent of other parts of the Church, holding jurisdiction over all Christians within those limits, and still exempt from all control whatever of the Civil Ruler of that kingdom, is certainly no self-evident truth. It will be hard to prove it, either from Scripture, from history, or on grounds of reason. The Epistles, our chief direct authority in these matters, were all written within the lifetime of the Apostles, when no part of the Church could be exempt from a common supervision and control. Down to the time of Constantine, the Christians of no province seem to have claimed absolute independence

of all the rest. Thenceforward some control of the Christian Emperors was admitted at once in the calling and conduct of the general councils, and also in various laws, affecting the rights of the clergy and of Christian Churches. When most citizens of a State have become Christians, so that the members of the Church and of the State are mainly the same persons, sound reason teaches equally that Church Rulers have a natural claim to some leading part in the councils of the State, and that the Rulers of the State have a like claim to use their prerogative, as God's ministers for the good of the people, in that sphere of faith, worship, and Christian duty, on which, in the view alike of ruler and people, the welfare of the nation mainly depends.

Again, is it likely or possible that the right of the Civil Ruler to take any part in the government of the Church would remain wholly unaltered by his own entrance within its pale? Does he enter it as a private person alone, leaving his high office behind him at the outer gate of the temple? No view can be more unnatural, or more directly opposed to the precedents of the Old Testament, and to the tone of the Apostolic commands. It is very plain that rulers cannot suitably hold the pastoral office, or rank with the ordained clergy of the Christian Church. So then the result of this doctrine must be that those whom the Word of God calls 'gods' and 'glories,' 'principalities' and 'powers,' and special images on earth of Divine authority, are the only class condemned to subjection, and excluded from any possible share of Church government, when once nations become Christian, and they themselves submit to the sceptre of the Son of God.

Fifthly, does the contrast between the Church and the kingdoms of this world rest on a fundamental ordinance of Christ, irrespective of the faith or unbelief of rulers and their people? Are all the presumptions, as alleged, against any later change in their first relation of distinctness, and even antagonism? How can such a view be held by any thoughtful reader of the sacred history? The tabernacle was built by Divine command, after a pattern shown to Moses in the Mount. Yet after the victories of David, and the entrance of a line of sacred kings, it was replaced by the nobler temple of Solomon. The ark, first made at Sinai, rested at Gilgal, and then at Shiloh; but it was afterwards transferred to its home in Jerusalem, the royal city, and to Mount Zion, where were the thrones of judgment. The name of the Church implies a secret reference to the heathenism and idolatry of the nations. Had the Jews welcomed, as they ought to have done, their own Messiah, they would have been a Church State, and a State Church, a righteous nation, with national ordinances of holy worship, from the first hour of the Gospel. They would have been the mother, mistress, and pattern to all the Gentile Churches, with the civil and ecclesiastical elements entwined as closely as possible by God's own hand. Any other nation, the moment all its citizens ceased to rebel against the Gospel by idolatry and unbelief, would become one main part of the Church of Christ. Would it be their first duty, when their whole life had become a Christian life, their whole being dedicated to their Saviour, to depose their king and magistrates, and degrade them into private members of the Church, and to set up the sole jurisdiction of bishops or presbyters in their stead?

The text, Matt. xxii. 21, already examined, is pressed into the service of the same argument. 'It implies that some things are God's in such a sense as not to belong to Cæsar at all.' There is no great difficulty in settling what they are. Cæsar's things are the persons and property of men, and God's things are the conscience of men, and the Church of Christ. The civil magistrate rightly has jurisdiction over the persons and property of men, because this is indispensable to the execution of the functions of his office, the promotion of the good order and prosperity of the community. He has no jurisdiction over the conscience, because 'God alone is the Lord of conscience, and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men.' He has no jurisdiction over the Church of Christ, because 'Christ alone is its King and Head,' and has made full provision for its government, without vesting any control over it in the civil magistrate. 'Ecclesiastical or spiritual things are just the ordinary necessary business of the Church,—all those acts and processes which the Church performed before her connexion with the State, and which should be performed wherever a Church exists.'

It has been shown before that these words of our Lord are a climax rather than a contrast; and so far as there is a contrast at all, it is between the things which are truly Cæsar's, and things which the Pharisees falsely claimed as beyond his jurisdiction. That there can be no absolute contrast is plain, since all that are Cæsar's must be at the same time included among the things of God. Persons and property are His, as well as consciences and the Church of Christ. But the attempt to



define the contrast only betrays the difficulty of the task. Persons and property are no contrast to consciences and the Church of Christ. For the Church of Christ consists of persons; and persons, unless the term is used for bodies alone, must include the conscience, and every faculty of the soul of man. And besides, the distinction is refuted by the narrative. It was a case of conscience, which the Pharisees submitted to Christ. 'Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar?' Our Lord's reply is directly opposed to the notion that a scruple of conscience can set aside the just claims of the local ruler, obedience to whom, in lawful things, was also an act of obedience to the will of God. The Apostle unites the two things as plainly in his charge to all Christians,—'Ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake.'

But the facts of the Gospel set aside this attempted contrast in another way. For the Pharisees sat in judgment on our Lord as a Church court, and condemned Him for blasphemy. Their abuse of ecclesiastical jurisdiction brought ruin on the Jewish State. Now if Pilate's office gave him right of jurisdiction, 'so far as indispensable to the promotion of the prosperity of the community,' then it justified him in quashing and annulling their ecclesiastical sentence. It would have been an act of duty, and no excess of power. His own guilt and shame, and the ruin of the nation over whom he was governor, depended on his guilty refusal to carry out the revealed design of his office, and to execute justice, even by reversing, as magistrate, an ecclesiastical sentence of the Jewish Church rulers.

The last assertion is a contradiction of Article 37, and

proves how far the bias of prejudice may blind able and honest minds to evident truth. The interferences of the kings of Judah in sacred things, we are told, were ‘ manifestly occasional, isolated, and peculiar in their character and circumstances, may be referred to the prophetical, rather than the kingly office.’ A surprising statement ! It is hard to see how the inclusion of religious duties in the sphere of royal authority, could be more plainly taught than by the whole tenor of the Old Testament history.

To begin from the Exodus, when Israel rose into a nation. All the sacred laws were given, not by Aaron the priest, but by Moses, who is styled at the close of the laws themselves, ‘ king in Jeshurun.’ Joshua succeeded him as the civil and military leader of the people of God. All the priests and Levites, as well as the people, were at his commandment. By his direction, the priests carried the ark, and stood still in the midst of Jordan, the rite of the covenant was renewed, and the passover kept in Gilgal, the blessings and curses publicly read and proclaimed by all the Levites at Ebal and Gerizim, the assignments of the Levitical cities were made, a protest raised against a supposed ecclesiastical separation of the Reubenites, and the covenant twice renewed, before his death, at Shechem and Shiloh. Still later, the removal of the ark to Zion, the huge preparations for the building of the Temple, the fresh arrangements for the courses of the priests, the instructions for singing in the tabernacle or temple worship, were all made by the will of David, the king after God’s own heart. And they were all done by him, not by Gad or Nathan, though doubtless these were

consulted, but in his public capacity as the king and ruler of Israel. (1 Chron. xiii. 1, 5, 13; xv. 3, 11, 14, 16, 25; xvi. 2, 4; xxi., xxii. 1, 2, 17-19; xxiii. 6, 27.) The Temple was built, and its dedication ordered and mainly performed, by Solomon, not as a prophet, but expressly as that son of David, to whom the kingdom had been assigned by name, in connexion with his fulfilment of this loyal service to God. It is recorded to the praise of Asa, that he put away the abominable idols out of Judah and Benjamin, and renewed the altar of the Lord, brought into the house of God the things which his father and himself had dedicated, and gathered all the people to renew a solemn and sacred covenant with the God of their fathers. His son Jehoshaphat took away the high places and groves, and sent his princes, and with them Levites and priests, to teach in the cities of Judah. 'And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people.' After this he is praised for taking away the grove idols, and 'he went again through the people, and brought them back unto the Lord God of their fathers. And in Jerusalem he set of the Levites and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers for the judgment of the Lord.' Hezekiah, in the first year of his reign, opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them, and brought together the priests and Levites, gave them a royal charge to sanctify themselves, to cleanse the house of God, and received their report when the work he assigned them was fulfilled. He commanded the priests to offer the offering for the kingdom, and set the Levites for the

service of song, and again commanded the priests to offer the burnt offering, and the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praises to the Lord with the psalms of David and Asaph, 'and they sang praises, and bowed their heads and worshipped.' He took counsel with the princes and the congregation, and thus ordained the celebration of the passover, for special and temporary causes, in the second instead of the first month. All these acts of royal authority in sacred things are named for high praise, and the result was a peculiar blessing and a great deliverance.

The features in the Reformation of Josiah are just the same. The work was assigned him by prophecy long before, not as a prophet, but as a righteous king. 'A child shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name.' And one part of the great work is thus described: 'He set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the Lord.' Thus the action of the kings of Israel and Judah in sacred things was not 'occasional, isolated, and peculiar,' but uniform, conspicuous, in every successive age from Moses to Zerubabel and Nehemiah, whenever the rulers of Israel remembered their true calling, and the great precept given to them from the first, to read the book of God's law, and meditate thereon continually, that they might prolong their days by obedience to the will of God.

Mutual dependence, not absolute independence and separation, is thus the true ideal, confirmed by the voices of the Spirit for a thousand years, between the Church and the State, the Prince, and the priest or prophet, when these understand the true nature and limits of

their own office. The attempt to degrade the Christian King into a secular animal, who has to care only for the bodies of men, whether made to sustain the exclusive jurisdiction of a Papal hierarchy, or of Presbyterian synods, over the people of Christ, is repelled by the consenting testimony of the whole Word of God. He who is the Head of the Church is also 'Prince of the kings of the earth.' These too, no less than the pastors of the Church, derive their authority from Him. All believers are indeed a royal priesthood. But if the priestly consecration to God's worship is to be doubly conspicuous in the pastors of the Church, the royal dignity which belongs to all believers, with its trust of rule and authority, has to receive its chief exhibition in those Christian 'principalities and powers' who are ordained by God himself to image His own sovereignty, and who are called 'gods' in a Scripture which cannot be broken. The attempt to simplify the difficult problems of Church government by an entire denial of the right of Christian sovereigns to interfere may suit the pretensions of a corrupt and ambitious hierarchy, or become popular when churches degenerate into pure democracies, and the despising of dignities is taken for a sign of spiritual freedom; but it is condemned alike by the voice of reason, and by God's history of the chosen people for two thousand years.

In this mutual dependence of the rulers of the Church and of the State, there are two main sources of danger. There is a constant tendency, in pastors and theologians, to confound their own traditions with the essentials of Christianity. They are thus in danger of hazarding the peace of society, the union of the Church, and the in-



fluence of religion, from zeal for points of doubtful expediency, in which no law of Christian duty is really involved. Mere statesmen, on the other hand, are too apt to think that nothing is firm or stable in Divine truth, that religious creeds have weight and value merely from the number of those who hold them; and that, whether doctrines are true or false, and practices right or wrong, the favour publicly shown to them should be determined by statistics, and motives of expediency alone.

Between these extremes, that everything is fixed in the form and outward arrangements of the Church, and that nothing is fixed in Christianity itself, there is a wide opening for divergence of opinion, and serious contests may thus arise. But for these there is no remedy, till error and sin are banished from the high places of the earth, and that kingdom shall be established, in which truth and righteousness shall prevail for ever. In that kingdom, for which the Church has waited through long ages of delay, the rulers will at once be priests and kings, and holy consecration to the service of God will pervade every rank, from the cottage to the throne. All alike will be consecrated to His service,—‘for of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.’

## CHAPTER VII.

## ON PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL MAJORITIES.

OUR national Christianity is now assailed and threatened, not only in the name of Religious Equality and Ecclesiastical Freedom, but of the absolute power and supremacy of parliament. The basis of modern liberal theories of politics is the sovereignty of the people. Their will, it is further assumed, declares itself, under the British Constitution, by the votes of a majority in the House of Commons. All the old landmarks may be swept away; but this right of a Commons' majority to pull down Churches, or set them up, to impose oaths on the nominal Sovereign, or explain them away, and absolve from their natural meaning, is to survive amidst the ruin. The ecclesiastical supremacy of a Christian Sovereign, a member of the Church, who rules by the grace of God, and is solemnly bound by oath to take His word for the supreme law of his counsels, is to be exchanged for the like supremacy of the major vote of representatives of the people, freed more and more from any religious bonds or profession—Churchmen, Dissenters, Roman Catholics, Jews and Infidels; who sit side by side to legislate, with no common standard of religious

faith to which appeal can be made. How far does reason justify, or the nature of the Church warrant, this momentous change?

Our Constitution has been based, for a thousand years, on public homage to Christ, the True and Eternal King. Christianity is the fundamental law of our land, inwrought into the whole texture of our national history. On this all the legislation of Alfred, and the whole later growth of our jurisprudence depends. The Sovereign, at each accession, as representing the nation, reverently accepts the Word of God for the guide of his counsels, and as a Divine law of supreme authority. Our kings reign by the grace of God. The bishops of the Church of Christ, as spiritual peers, are one of the Three Estates of the realm. They share thus in the whole work of legislation, and have their fixed constitutional place among the advisers of the Crown. Even the Commons enter on their office, with a few late exceptions only, by a public confession of their faith in Christ. Their meetings for business, both by law and usage, have to be first hallowed by a public act of Christian worship. The Revolution gave new strength to the popular elements of our constitution. But while it deepened and intensified its Protestant character, it maintained firmly the old foundations of national allegiance to Christ, on which our political greatness has been builded for more than a thousand years.

The ideal of the British Constitution, which 'the great Liberal party,' under a leader who once espoused a far truer and nobler principle, are striving to attain, is widely different. The old outlines have changed already,

and are changing still ; so that before many years, at our actual rate of progress, the balanced harmonies of our Christian and Protestant Constitution will be wholly gone. And what will have succeeded in its stead ? The supposed right of seven-twelfths of the House of Commons, returned by one-third of the electoral body, to turn five-twelfths of their own House into political nullities, the Crown into a mere tool of their will, the House of Peers into a registration-office for their decisions, the Coronation Oath into an idle and worthless form ; and all this in order to untwist Christianity from our institutions, and turn them into momentary reflections of the popular will. The final result of such progress must be an atheistic confederacy, whose policy and whose faith may be summed up in one short text alone : ‘ Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.’

In our old constitution the supreme power is conjointly in the Crown, the Spiritual and Temporal Peers, and the Representatives of the people. The Sovereign, by title and by solemn oath, embodies the fundamental relation between the nation and the living God, the King and Governor of all the nations of the earth. The Spiritual Peers represent the union of the State with the Church of Christ, His ordinance for the moral consecration of society to its noblest ends. The Temporal Peers embody the relation of the present to former generations, and that historical unity through successive ages, on which the hope of every great people depends. The House of Commons, by its periodical election, and its control of the national purse, represents the relation of the Legislature to the actual, present wants and wishes of the people. Whenever,

then, faith decays, and large and noble thought dies out from the national life, so that wealth and bodily comfort become the highest aim, this popular branch of the Legislature tends naturally to supersede and absorb the rest. The claims of the living God and His eternal truth, the rights and privileges of the Church of Christ, and all the ennobling memories of the past life of the people, are then ready to be sacrificed to the passions of the hour, and the momentary caprices of the popular will. A thick mist and darkness blots out the everlasting stars from the firmament, and the nation is guided by the help of gaslight alone.

The main steps of the change are these. First, the true dignity of the Sovereign as God's viceregent, with limited and well-defined, but real powers of government, is sacrificed to a so-called constitutional theory, which makes him reflect passively, like a lifeless mirror, the wishes of the majority of the people. The Coronation Oath is then explained away, as no covenant with God to maintain fundamental laws, the reflection of God's will, but simply as a promise to the people to obey their decrees and wishes, whatever these may be. The maxim that the king can do no wrong—which, strictly taken, involves the consequence that he can do no right—is so explained and applied as to degrade him almost into a mere cipher, with no freedom of choice or personal action. His sole prerogative is to accept those advisers, whom a vote of the Lower House may force upon him. The Veto having long become dormant, and the choice of councillors being made wholly dependent on the will of others, the Crown is put permanently into commission, except for



a certain routine of signatures and State ceremonies. Thus the exclusion of the King or Queen, the nominal sovereign, from all real sovereignty, is almost complete. The House of Peers, also—because they are hereditary, not elective—are counted aliens from the true representation of the people; instead of representing it, as they do, or ought to do, in all its memories of the past, and its ennobling links with bygone generations. They are looked upon as a mere check on the haste and rashness of the Lower House in legislative details; and as bound, whatever their own judgment may be, to register submissively the choice of the multitude, once shown by a persistent majority of the House of Commons. Lastly, that House itself, by the successive entrance of Dissenters, Roman Catholics, Jews, and even Infidels, ceases more and more to look on itself as a Christian body, whose duty to Christ, as His disciples and servants, takes precedence of their obligation to their own electors themselves. Thus they sink naturally more and more into a house of mere delegates, bound to reflect passively the opinions of those who elect them, and to carry out blindly the popular war-cries of the hour.

The change is not yet complete. The Protestant Succession, the Coronation Oath, the presence of the spiritual peers in Parliament as one of the three estates of the realm, the Christian profession made by the Lords and most of the Commons, the prayers which introduce every sitting of Parliament, and many other testimonies of the same kind, but, most of all, the national establishment of the Reformed Church,—bear witness to a nobler standard, which the Liberal movement would fain set aside, to

replace it by an opposite ideal of its own. The progress, however, has been great; and some who once saw and taught the danger of this godless course are now the foremost to hurry us on towards its consummation, because such, they have come to see, is the behest of the sovereign people;—a melancholy position, for which no ephemeral praise of man will be any compensation, when men and measures, and parliaments and statesmen, come to be weighed in the solemn balances of the sanctuary of God.

The tendency of this great liberal movement is plain. The Queen, the Peers, the Rulers of the Church of Christ, and the Church itself, are to be deposed from all real share in guiding the national policy. Supreme power is to be lodged in the momentary, fluctuating majorities of the House of Commons, each member being returned by a majority of votes, including all classes down to the lowest, counted, not weighed, and the decision resting with numbers alone. But the rule of bare majorities, which might be tolerable when all the old checks and balances and Christian foundations of the State were retained, sinks into the worst and meanest form of tyranny, when once these are swept away. Fire is the worst of masters, though one of the best of servants. The same is true of the voice of mere majorities, elected by mere majorities in their turn. Even in favourable circumstances, government in such hands must be capricious, mutable, and uncertain. The many-headed despot cannot know its own mind, or foresee its own decisions, from month to month, and hardly from day to day. When it assumes entire supremacy, by treading under foot national

compacts of former days—oaths which bind the nation to God and His truth, and to the Christian institutions of former generations—its perilous nature is greatly increased. The spirits of darkness could then hardly find a tool better suited for carrying out their dark designs, and hurrying nations, by delusive watchwords, and the abuse of sacred names, in that downward course of ungodliness, which ends, soon or late, in certain ruin.

What is the working of this new theory of the constitution, though still incomplete, at the present hour? The Act of Union is to be annulled, and two opposite principles of religious policy to be set up on opposite sides of the Channel, so as to leave the State Protestant and Christian in England, and make it Neutral and Infidel in Ireland, in the name of religious equality, and to please the Irish Romanists, to whom Protestantism is a great abomination, but Infidelity a greater still. The chief argument for this great change, with many speakers and writers, which is to make reasoning and debate superfluous, is the fact that seven-twelfths of the members have been returned to the new House of Commons, pledged to help on the overthrow of the Irish Establishment. An opposite return of fifty-seven members would have turned the scales in the House to the other side, and have given an excess of fifty English members against this great organic change of our national policy. An opposite vote of two thousand five hundred electors, out of a total of near two millions in the whole, and out of a million and a quarter of actual voters in the contests, would have secured this number of Conservative instead of Liberal returns. The immense majority, then, which is to justify

and demand a desertion and inversion of the precedents of a thousand years, resolves itself into the judgment, prejudice, or self-interest of just one voter out of eight hundred—these deciding votes being probably the most corrupt, ignorant, and worthless, of all those under a household franchise in the balanced constituencies to which they belong. These, by the new theory, have acquired an absolute power to annul the rights of the Crown, the Peers, and the Church; and, by the majority they have created in the Lower House, to unchristianize the State on one side of the Channel, and stultify it on the other, and to reverse our national policy on a question which lies at the very basis of our Constitution. The supreme power is thus transferred from the King or Queen, who reigns by the grace of God, and represents His authority, and from the Peers, who equally represent the nation's historical life; and is lodged practically with two thousand five hundred of the poorest and most ignorant householders, with whom a newspaper paragraph, or perhaps a day's wages, or half-a-sovereign, might turn the scale, and transfer their votes from one side to another. What an enormous premium is here on electoral corruption, making it nearly hopeless for the most stringent laws to remove the evil, or do more than force it into some new disguise! What a lame and impotent conclusion, also, to all the boasts of Liberal progress, to create for our great and noble empire such a sovereign as this—worse and lower in the scale of true wisdom than the choice of the trees in Jotham's parable, when they forsook the vine and the fig-tree, and said to the bramble, 'Come thou, and be king over us!'

But apart from this radical defect of the Liberal

theory, which makes a bare Commons majority absolute and supreme, the subject may be viewed on another side. The Church, in its alliance with the State, accepted the supremacy of the Crown, that is, of a Christian sovereign, a member of the Church, and a sharer in its worship, openly and solemnly pledged to obey the revealed will of God. This supremacy, however, in the improved constitution, is to be transferred to the smallest majority in the Lower House, each of them possibly returned by a bare majority, or an actual minority, of the local electors, and almost certainly by a minority of the whole electoral body, with no common profession of faith, or public act of allegiance to Christ, to restrict their claim to submission from the Church or the people. These electors now include, as forming their majority, the least educated, least intelligent, and most dependent classes, whose votes weigh exactly the same as those of the wisest, most thoughtful, and most honoured citizens. Any number of these above a fourth of the electoral body, and really much fewer, from the unequal size of the constituencies, have power, unless some accident may hinder, to become the practical sovereign of our great empire. In the recent contests about 500,000 electors, out of a million and a half in the contested seats alone, have returned the dominant majority; who claim the right to disestablish the Irish Church, and repeal a fundamental part of the Acts of Union, without further argument, by virtue of their number, and the will of their electors alone. So far as the system is a guarantee, one-third of a million of voters, or about one-sixth of the whole electoral body, might return a working majority of the House of Commons, and there is no security that



these should not be the most corrupt, and least intelligent portion of the whole. Yet the majority of the Lower House, returned by such a minority of the electoral body, themselves a minority of the people, claim to step into the supremacy of the Christian Sovereign, and to rule at their pleasure over the Church of Christ, as well as all the Estates of the realm.

Here, then, a weighty question must arise. What moral right have a majority, in virtue of their superior number, to compel the minority to submit to their will? The consent of a Christian people to obey laws, in which the lawgivers themselves submit to Christ, own His authority, and honour His word, is very different from the like submission to lawgivers, who own no creed, and count it an insult to ask whether they are believers in Christ or unbelievers, because they are the majority in an elected House of Commons, though returned by little more than one-third of the electoral body, from whose choice alone they profess to derive their power. Have these electors, just one-fifth in number of the whole adult and male population of the empire, by virtue of numbers alone, the right to annul the compact between the country and its God in the Coronation Oath, between England and Ireland in a fundamental part of the Act of Union, and to uproot and destroy the Christian foundations on which our history has been based for a thousand years, without respect to the judgment alike of the spiritual and temporal peers, the two other estates of advisers to the crown, or the personal judgment and wishes of the sovereign, who is assumed to be a nullity, and whose constitutional task is to register passively the will of these electors, or their

deputies, and this alone? Can they justly claim, under no conditions, a supremacy ceded by the Church to the Christian sovereign under definite conditions, the first and chief being a solemn pledge to maintain unimpaired the privileges of the Church, to rule in the fear of God, and accept the words of Christ as laws ever binding on the royal conscience? The duty of submission in outward things to the civil rulers depends on their actual rule, and on a Divine ordinance, however corrupt and ungodly they may be. But the submission of the Church, or any branch of it, to the authority of rulers in sacred things, in matters of faith and worship, and trusts inherited and held by the Church for sacred uses, depends on the maintenance by those rulers of a sacred character, or at least of its outward profession. A Christian Sovereign, reigning professedly by the grace of God, openly honouring His word, and owning a charge and duty to defend the faith, is not the same with a mere majority of a House of Commons, whom no common faith unites, where submission to the name of Christ forms no condition of their entrance or office; nay, where many of them glory in their advocacy of principles, which exclude all religious distinctions of creed and practice from having any weight in the counsels of the land. When Protestant and even Christian ascendancy, as we are told, must soon cease in the national constitution, what right can remain to a neutral, faithless, non-religious House of Commons' majority, to touch, even with one of its fingers, the sacred ark of Christ, or to turn into their own possessions the trusts which the Church has inherited, for sacred uses, from the piety of sovereigns or private per-

sons in former days? Power they may have, if backed by the will of multitudes as faithless as themselves. But how can they escape from the double guilt of a hateful sacrilege, and lawless tyranny and usurpation?

But the liberal theory, which now threatens the utter overthrow of the British Constitution, goes a step still further in its prodigious and unnatural claim. For we are told that not only the national majority, or rather the electoral minority, one in fifty of the population, who return the Commons' majority, have a right to be supreme over the Church, the Peers, and the Crown, but that justice requires the claim to extend to a local majority in matters which affect their local interests. The Irish Roman Catholics are a majority in Ireland. On this ground alone it is urged that the Irish branch of the United Church is an injustice, since in an Irish question the will of this Irish majority ought in justice to be put in force by the Imperial Parliament. If this claim of justice be true, its refusal is a grievous wrong, and rebellion is a justifiable self-defence, should the British Commons, the Peers, or the Crown, refuse to carry out the sovereign behests of the Irish peasantry, who form the local majority. But these peasants, by virtue of their actual faith, are almost the passive tools of the Romish priesthood in political affairs, and this priesthood is an organized body under the law of implicit submission to the supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome. Thus the practical upshot of this view of political justice is that the Protestant representatives of a Protestant people, the Peers, and the Queen, are bound to degrade themselves by undertaking the task of pulling down and despoiling a Pro-

testant Church, of stripping Protestant landlords of their possessions, and of setting up a corrupt and idolatrous church, at least one which most of them believe or have professed to believe idolatrous, in superior or even supreme rank and power, because such is the wish of an ignorant and superstitious peasantry, and justice requires the local majority to decide by its votes what the local policy of the State shall be. A more unjust, ignoble, ungodly principle was surely never propounded for the acceptance of a Christian people. Its wide acceptance and popularity is a melancholy sign of the moral mist and darkness, like that with which Elymas was once smitten for his contempt of God's truth, which seems fast creeping over multitudes in this once Protestant and Christian land.

Political justice never did, and never can consist, in pandering to the local prejudices of every section of the people, and every separate district or province of the empire, and in sacrificing to these the faith of solemn compacts, and the claims of God's own eternal truth. If a State ceases to believe in God's word, or to have reverence for His truth and His worship, it ceases to have the least right or just claim to meddle with sacred things at all; though, since unbelief and presumption usually go together, it may seek blindly to retain power, when the foundation on which it rests is gone, and thus lapse, before it is aware, into tyranny and oppression. But it can have no right to divert property, held in trust for sacred uses, to uses not sacred, because it has ceased itself to have any religious faith, and wishes to propitiate those who hate the truth, which the State itself is learning to despise. Trust property, received by inheritance, can be justly alienated

only on one of two grounds, that the objects of the trust are positively mischievous to society; or that they are comparatively worthless, and the funds devoted to them excessive in amount, beyond that measure of abuse, in the case of private property, with which wise rulers forbear to interfere. If it be more hurtful to the State to hold certain funds on condition of maintaining a holy worship, and teaching Divine truth, than as mere selfish possessions, to be spent on gambling, horse-racing, or the last absurdities of fashionable expense, at the will of the possessor; or if the prejudices and religious hatreds of the most ignorant classes of the people, provided they are many in number in any district, are the true law and rule of political justice, then the course which pulls down the Irish Church to gratify the Irish peasantry or their priests, and which to-morrow may repeat the like operation on the English Church also, is a just, sagacious, and upright policy. But if the reverse is plainly true, then the plea of justice raised on behalf of the intended and expected revolution, is a still more grievous sacrilege and profanation than even the alienation of the Church property itself. The attempt is vain, to propitiate those who cannot, and by their own principles ought not to be appeased, till the rights of the British Crown and people are trampled once more under the feet of some haughty legate of the Bishop of Rome.

A majority, whether in or out of Parliament, whether in England or Ireland, or the whole empire, has no rightful power over a minority by virtue of superior number, but only by mutual consent, or by some Divine ordinance, to which its appeal must be made, and which no Infidel



majority can make, without a moral suicide. In all the past history of our world, it is minorities, and not majorities, which have always had right, truth, and wisdom on their side. The worship of mere numbers, and still more of votes, that dare not appear in the light of day, but conceal themselves in ballot-boxes, is one of the lowest, meanest, and most degrading forms of heathenish worship. Christian men, unless faith dies wholly from their hearts, cannot, will not, and ought not to submit to it very long. The narrow way is the way of a minority, for few, our Lord has said, are they that find it; and the broad way is that of the majority, for many there have always been, alas, who walk therein. Truth and right have always hitherto prevailed, in the first instance, by the faith and zeal of a smaller number, prevailing after a time over the resistance, the apathy, or the folly, of a greater number who before had gone astray. And minorities, not seldom, have had the superior power, as well as greater right, on their side. A few soldiers may prevail over a numerous but unarmed multitude. In the earliest war on record, four kings fought against five, and it was the smaller number, not the greater, which gained the victory. It was wrested from them, soon after, by a single leader, and a smaller company still. The Israelites were much fewer than the Egyptians or the Canaanites, and prevailed over each of them in turn. The men of Gideon were a very little company, and the mighty host of Midian was scattered before them to the winds. The attempt to pull down our Christian Constitution, with its balanced and harmonious rights, sealed by solemn compacts of the Crown, the Church, the Peers, the Commons, and the whole people,

and replace it by a simple despotism of measuring cast majorities, whether of superstitious and ignorant Irish peasants, or of the most ignorant and least instructed classes in our Scotch and English towns, is a mournful folly, condemned almost by every page of the Word of God, and the whole course of human history for four thousand years. It may prosper for a moment, but its triumphing will be short. The Rock is one, the grains of shifting sand are countless in number ; but woe to the house which is built on no better and surer foundation than this majority alone. It cannot stand in the day of conflict and trial. It must disappear as in a moment, when both Church and State are sifted to their foundations by the confederate forces of superstition and unbelief ; and when the one True and Eternal King, whom unbelieving majorities have always despised, shall arise in His majesty to shake terribly the earth.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## CHURCH ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE LIGHT OF HISTORY.

A NATIONAL Church Establishment, in its healthy condition, requires the harmonious union of three separate elements. The rights of conscience, the authority of Church rulers, and the claims of the kingly office or civil power, have all to be reconciled. The first alone, when the claims of authority are cast aside, can lead only to anarchy and vice as in the days of Gibeah. The dominion of the State, when the Church becomes a mere tool of the Civil Power, and liberty is stifled, answers only to the bondage of Egypt and of Babylon. Church authority in its turn, when unrestrained by royal authority and the rights of conscience, tends to Antichristian tyranny and idolatrous corruptions of the faith. The balance of these three powers, in our imperfect world, is the best security against the abuses to which they are separately exposed.

In the attempt to adjust these rival claims, difficulties must and will arise. Ambitious priests may usurp the rights of the Civil Ruler, and pontiffs lord it proudly over emperors and kings. These in their turn may invade the rights of the Church, and use their power to crush con-

science, and to corrupt and set aside the ordinances of Christ. Both of them may confederate to destroy all liberty of conscience; while conscience in its turn may be pleaded, in a lawless age, to set authority at defiance, and consecrate the most mischievous errors with the name of religion. The ideal union has perhaps never been so fully attained as in our own Protestant constitution since the Revolution, the carved work which our Liberal statesmen are now striving to break down with their axes and hammers. But the actual state and conduct, both of rulers and people, has fallen so short of the high ideal itself, and such evils and anomalies have arisen from this grievous contrast, that the unavoidable result is to endanger its utter overthrow, though in itself one of the ripest works of God's holy Providence, and one of the noblest gifts ever bestowed on a sinful people in our fallen world. Let us now consider the principles of our Establishment and of the present attempts for its destruction, in the light of past history, and of the hopes which the Word of God sets before us concerning better days to come.

Appeals to history have been often made by the zealous adversaries of Church Establishments. All the sins and crimes of rulers in former days are exposed, to prove the evil of suffering them to interfere at all with Church affairs. Too many Christians forget the warnings of St. Peter and St. Jude, and dilate with pleasure on the folly of despots, or the profligacy of royal defenders of the faith. Such loose declamation serves only to throw dust into the eyes, and conceal the real question. The duty of parents does not cease, because too few discharge them aright, and train their children wisely in the fear of God.

Religion is not the only subject on which kings or statesmen have too often pursued a rash or wicked policy. Trade and commerce, peace and war, by the very same rule of judgment must also be exempted from their jurisdiction, and their deposition from their high dignity will then be complete.

Appeals to experience, made in the dark, lead only to increased prejudice and delusion. The results of human actions are so complicated and various, that it needs omniscience to separate them, and assign to each event or effect its real cause. We must know first what motives are lawful, what principles are true and right, before we can judge safely on the good or evil tendency of particular acts. If we assume false principles, and interpret history by these assumptions, experience will be only like a meteor, to lead us further astray than if we had merely groped in the darkness of our own reasonings. In this way levellers have proved, to their own satisfaction, the evils of private property, and profligates the mischief and folly of Christian marriage. The dark catalogue of thefts and murders, or of domestic troubles and miseries, may be made no less impressive than the religious follies or persecuting violence of kings. To ascribe the public wickedness of States for fifteen centuries to National Religion is just as wise, as to refer all their adulteries, thefts, and murders, to the two ordinances of property and of marriage.

History, like the heathen oracles, is prone to give false answers, according to the prejudices of those by whom the appeal is made. The Romanist, from the heresies that have arisen in the Church, and the dissensions of



Protestants, plausibly infers the need of a living and infallible arbiter and judge of controversy, to determine every dispute that may arise. The secular statesman, from the many forms of bigotry that have appeared, and their danger to the peace of society, gathers as confidently the need of State control, to restrain fanaticism, intolerance, and religious discord. The Voluntary or Liberationist, from the risk of persecution, and the prevalence of worldliness and formality in most national churches, infers the guilt of all State interference, and the duty of entire neutrality on the part of rulers. The Infidel, from the varieties of creed which have prevailed, and the wars and troubles to which they have led, concludes that the Gospel is a dream of superstition, and religion one of the greatest enemies to the peace of mankind. The events, in each case, are expounded by the prejudices of the interpreter, and the proof of his view, which he thinks he draws from them, is wholly fallacious. We must first learn whether the Gospel be true or false ; whether the Bishop of Rome is the appointed Vicar of Christ, or an usurping prelate ; and whether the national confession of Christ is a duty or a sin ; before we can judge rightly of the actions of rulers and Church controversies, or gain real wisdom from the complex religious history of former days. Practices, which contradict certain principles, can never prove them untrue. Persecution of the truth, however frequent, can never prove it wrong to help in diffusing it ; and the abuse of kingly authority, so as to defeat its own aims, can never prove these objects unlawful, nor set aside the duty of endeavouring to attain them in a wiser and happier way.

On the other hand, when the true laws of national duty have once been ascertained, fresh light must be thrown upon them from the history of former days. We shall then hold the balance more steadily in our thoughts between the opposite dangers of abused authority and licentious self-will. Spurious theories always confound things together, which are moral contrasts. Censures, which light justly on the idolatry of Ahab and the persecuting cruelties of Jezebel, are then aimed equally against the royal offerings of David, or the zeal of Hezekiah when he broke in pieces the serpent of brass, and cleansed from its idolatrous defilements the sanctuary of God.

Most errors on these subjects have their source in the love of a false simplicity. Men, in a busy, worldly age, like to be saved the trouble of laborious thought, and to find some theory that solves their doubts in a moment. They cut the knot which they have not the patience to untie. It is troublesome to limit and define the true rights of conscience, and therefore they proclaim it one and indivisible, like the first French Republic, or even omnipotent. They cannot, at one glance, reconcile the authority of civil rulers with the double rights of Christian pastors and private Christians, and hence they deny princes all connexion with the support of true religion, in opposition to every Scripture precedent. In pursuit of the same simplicity, church rulers are degraded, by many, into mere registrars of the votes of a congregation. When such a lazy spirit prevails, National Religion will be looked upon with dislike and suspicion. Its claims force upon us a more laborious course of thought and inquiry. Questions of public and private duty then arise, which cannot be

solved without Scriptural research, silent meditation, and insight into the nature of man, and the true wants of society. It is far easier to condemn Josiah, Hezekiah, and David, and all Jewish and Christian kings who have befriended true religion, side by side with hypocrites and profligates, than to define the true and just limits of royal interference with Church affairs. The doctrine of State neutrality, like quack medicines to cure all diseases, is perfect in the hands of a child. It makes it needless to study the limits of conscience, the laws of human nature, or the secret springs and fountains of man's social well-being. It is an easy and convenient shelter for all varieties of superficial thought and loose declamation, since it supplies an ample store of abuses on which to dwell, and avoids all difficult problems, in which rival claims have to be defined, and opposing duties reconciled with each other. If each planetary orbit were a perfect circle, unaffected by the rest, how far simpler astronomy would become! In morals how are great questions simplified, if the Ruler has nothing to do with religion, nor the Christian Church with civil society. But to gain this simplicity what sacrifices must be made! We must set aside the lessons of reason, the first principles of Christian morals, the honour of the kingly office, and all the precedents and examples of God's own Church history for a thousand years.

The difficulties of national religion are those which attend every effort to approach a pure and lofty ideal in a world of sin. Such difficulties are the price of excellence, the condition of all moral progress. It is easy to exalt the rights of conscience and reduce the province of rulers to a

mere point. There is nothing sublime in the policy, which leaves every one to do what is right in his own eyes. It is just as easy to resolve all religion into the infallibility of the Pope, or blind obedience to royal orders, whatever they may be. But such ease is dearly purchased, and is fatal to all true moral advancement. It is a downward path, in which kings and subjects, in turn, renounce their duties because they are hard to fulfil, and leads to moral degradation and ruin. But 'the way of life is above to the wise.' And this must be true of rulers and statesmen, even more than of private men. Man is too fearfully and wonderfully made, for the office of those who rule men aright to be ever confined within the narrow range of material interests. There may be perplexities in the higher walks of statesmanship, when a man believes and knows that nations are exalted by righteousness, and by righteousness alone. The Christian standard of duty is not to renounce true principles for false, under the vain excuse that these alone are popular, and those impracticable; but rather to copy Him who retired from the people, when they were coming to take Him by force, and make Him a king after their own heart, and to hold by the truth at whatever cost, in the full confidence of its final triumph. To sit down content with a policy, which excludes the name and the Word of Christ from the councils of princes, is really to enthrone Belial over the kingdoms of the earth. The advocates of such a policy may drop manna from their lips, to make the worse appear the better reason; but the ignoble ease and peaceful sloth of their religious neutrality are dearly bought by the loss of

national dignity, the sacrifice of the public conscience, and the destruction of all those sacred links which bind a people to the footstool of the King of kings.

Under the Old Testament, when heathen idolatry prevailed, one nation was chosen and set apart to be a witness for the truth of God. They were formed, by the express will of God himself, into a National Church, where holy worship was nationally maintained, and the hope of Messiah cherished, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made. And thus, when our Lord appeared, and the Gospel began its course, all the states and kingdoms of the earth were still in heathen darkness. At first the numbers of the Church were small, her strength feeble, her enemies mighty, and the work before her was vast and overwhelming. Her aim and calling was to fill this dark world with the light of heavenly truth, and renew the hearts of men to love and holiness, until at length all earthly kingdoms should become the kingdoms of the Lord. The evils to be feared were the decay of her own faith, and the inroad of heathen superstitions and secret unbelief, until the faithful city should become a harlot, the salt lose its savour, and the recovery of the nations, through the Church, to peace and holiness, seem even more hopeless than before.

In the three first centuries, Church Rulers and Christian people were of one heart and mind in the cause of Christ; but the whole power of the empire was arrayed against the Gospel. The whole Church, during the long conflict, bore witness to the claim of the Son of God to supreme lordship over the hearts and lives of all men, and



especially the Gentile rulers. With this great truth she travailed in birth amidst bitter persecution, and at length her travail ended, and the victory was complete. Idolatry was cast down from its eminence as an accursed thing. Kings and Emperors received the yoke of Christ, and owned that the Crucified was higher than the highest of earthly monarchs, the Source of their own authority, and Prince over all the kings of the earth. Then, too, loud voices of rejoicing were heard in heaven—‘Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ,’—to celebrate this triumph of God’s cause in the high places of the Roman Empire.

And now the attempt was first made to realize in Christian times the ideal of National Religion, and to reconcile the claims of personal faith, the authority of Church rulers, and the power and right of Christian kings. But there were great difficulties in the way. Even apart from royal patronage, the rapid growth of the Church had relaxed the purity of its profession. The example of rulers led numbers to yield a feigned and insincere obedience to the faith. The triumphs wrought through the sufferings of the martyrs turned the thoughts of many aside from the Master to the servants, and became the source of a popular superstition, that passed soon into open idolatry. The discipline and close union, which persecution made needful for the life of the Church, destroyed the balance between the claims of Christian liberty and public authority, and laid the foundations of a spiritual despotism. The line between the clergy and laity grew broader continually, and the claims of the priesthood mounted higher

and higher, till even the authority of emperors, in the decline of the empire, was no match for the growing strength of the ecclesiastical power.

Such was the first main form of evil within those nations, or parts of the empire, which had received the Christian faith. In its wide extension, the standard of Christian profession was lowered, till it sank into the passive acceptance of a formal creed, and of superstitious practices enjoined by Church rulers. The Civil Power, in its turn, became too weak to resist the superior pretensions of the Christian clergy. These grew and increased from age to age, till the mystery of iniquity unveiled itself complete, and Antichristian tyranny, under holy names, subverted the purity of the Gospel, trampled on the rights of the Christian people, and broke in pieces the sceptre of kings.

At the Reformation the light returned after darkness, and the Spirit of God revived with power the testimony to His own truth. The Papal yoke was shaken off by nearly one-half of Christendom, and purer Churches were built up anew, where the Word of God was faithfully preached, and the sacraments restored nearly or entirely to the primitive ordinance of Christ.

The effects of this change were very great on the internal relations of the Church and the Christian State. The Reformers gladly embraced the help offered to their great work, whether by rulers or people. Many princes were its earnest and enlightened friends and disciples, while others lent it aid from lower motives. The popular excesses in Germany repelled the wiser Reformers from dependence on the multitude, and led them to ally them-

selves more closely with the magistrate in whom they all recognized an ordinance of Christ himself. The Reformed Clergy, broken off from their former centre, had to choose, when faith declined, between dependence on the State and popular control. The former was their more natural choice in those days; and thus their deliverance from the Roman yoke exposed them to an excessive predominance of the civil power.

As soon as the early faith and zeal of the Reformation declined, this great evil appeared. The princes who took part in it at first, at least several of the chief, had their conscience penetrated with the claims of the Gospel, and the authority of the Word of God. But in the next generation the freshness of those first days of spiritual revival was gone. And now, instead of one vast Church tyranny, magnificent in conception, though its results were fearful in their evil, there was cause for alarm lest each fragment of the Church should sink into a local appendage of the State, and religion, the domain of conscience and faith, decline into a mere question of political geography. The very essence and life of Christianity was thus liable to be forgotten and die away.

This element of Civil Authority had predominance from the Reformation till the French Revolution. Even among Roman Catholics the Pope's authority could scarcely maintain itself against the royal power, and Louis XIV. had more entire control over the Gallican Church than even Pope Innocent. In Protestant countries ecclesiastics had still less unity and strength, to oppose excessive claims from the civil authorities. Their partial resistance was maintained chiefly through that element of popular will,

which began now to assert itself once more. Hence arose various churches or sects, in the seventeenth century, who protested against real or supposed usurpations of civil authority in sacred things, though few proceeded further, and ventured absolutely and entirely to deny its claims.

At the French Revolution a new tide of thought and feeling set in among nominal Christians, and its one tendency was to exalt the popular will above all ancient authority, whether in Church or State. Its most marked effects were seen in Papal countries, where institutions once based on the Gospel, but now perverted into mockeries, became an easy prey to infidel and democratic violence. But the change was also felt in Protestant lands. A new impulse was given to the popular element in Christian Churches, and civil and ecclesiastical authorities were weakened, even when the old forms were still retained. Now, for the first time, the claim of princes to have any control within the Church was extensively denied by pious men. The Christian ministry, in a numerous body, was not only reduced to a bare equality, very unlike its early constitution, but was made dependent on the vote of a majority of the people. The same influence worked doubly within national Churches. Many voluntary societies were formed by their members, to spread the Gospel at home and among the heathen ; while the power of legislation was more and more transferred from the person of a single ruler to mixed and popular assemblies. And thus the chief danger, to thoughtful observers, had now a new and different source. The popular element, too much obscured and set aside ever since the earliest times, now threatened to overturn all fixed authority, to

fill the world with petty religious democracies, and change the whole fabric of the Church, once compacted together like Jerusalem of old, into a chaos of communities and sects and congregations, with no fixed creed or discipline, no links with the past, no signs and pledges of future permanence, no law but the vote of the majority in each congregation, from day to day, and from hour to hour.

There have thus been three main stages in the history of the Church, marked by the successive predominance of three elements which need to be wisely tempered together, ecclesiastical authority, the civil power, and popular freedom. The first prevailed for twelve, and the second for three, centuries. The last, from its very nature, can only be of short continuance, for when once rulers come to represent the ideas that rule among the people, the power naturally returns more and more into their hands. The extremes to which they tend are the Popery of Boniface and Alexander VI., the national religion of Hobbes's 'Leviathan,' and the Socialism and Communism of modern days. All these alike borrow the phrases and forms of Christianity, and trample its doctrines and lessons really under their feet. The same tendencies exist even among true Christians, but are there kept back from their worst excesses and most bitter fruits. They reveal themselves in extreme attachment to church authority, and outward ritual and clerical claims; an excessive estimate of the importance to the Church of civil patronage; and a tendency to resolve the doctrine and discipline of Christ into the popular opinions of the day, and the vote of separate congregations. But



wherever the word of God is still honoured, there is a corrective for the worst evils that might arise ; though the great divergence and conflict of thought, in these three classes, tends greatly to weaken the energies, disturb the peace, and abate the moral power, of the whole Reformed Church of Christ in these last days.

It will now be more easy to form a true estimate of the dangers which are threatening our own National Church, and our country also, at the present hour.

Our nation has been raised, ever since the Reformation, and still more since the Revolution, to a public elevation, as a witness for God's truth in the earth, far beyond the actual attainments of the people at large. By the signal mercies of God's Providence, neutralising and restraining opposite tendencies to evil, our privileges, as a free, Protestant, Christian State, where Christ is publicly owned, his Church honoured, and order and freedom alike maintained, have greatly exceeded our due improvement of them, just as in the case of Israel in the days of old. In this contrast between a national ideal, and the actual state of the people, there are the seeds of inevitable decay. A moral palsy spreads through the Church and the State. Truths professed, but not heartily believed, soon turn to poison, and hypocrisy, conscious or unconscious, becomes like a law of national life. Oaths, which solemnly declare the duties of the sovereign, his counsellors, and the whole legislature, are then counted matters of mere form ; in other words, they become mockeries and perjuries. Articles of faith are defined to be only articles of peace, and to believe doctrines *ex animo* is held to mean only that we

must be prudent and moderate in our disbelief. Creeds, subscriptions, and declarations, however precise, all become useless, when they are explained to be only ancient forms, which are to be retained because vested rights and interests might be endangered by their removal.

When this blight and palsy begin, the elements which once were harmonised in our constitution become the source of growing discord. The advocates of establishments, when their principles are in the ascendant, and enter into the constitution, soon push them to a dangerous extreme. Implicit obedience to royal commands may then be made the substitute for Christian faith and holiness, courtly flatterers may receive the chief rule in the Church, and the temperate claims of religious liberty be visited with penalties as a heinous crime. The false steps of rulers, instead of being healed by wise counsel, have their evil increased by an arrogance, like that of Rehoboam's counsellors, which will not profit by the lessons of experience, and then charges on others the fatal effects of its own harshness and passion. Then religious schisms multiply, and breed uncertainty and religious doubt in the people at large. The piety of many sincere Christians is placed in open hostility to the religious institutions of the land, so as to transfer a great moral weight from the side of order to that of destruction, and thus to increase greatly the danger of their overthrow from growing ungodliness in the people at large.

Another form of evil, internal to the Church, in the decay of faith, will further endanger the national profession of the truth. Excessive claims on the part of the

clergy may bring them into collision with the Civil Power. When the essence of the Church is made to consist mainly in the canonical appointment of its rulers, and in miraculous, invisible powers conferred by ordination, on which the salvation of the laity is supposed to depend, the evils of spiritual usurpation, which have reached their height in the Church of Rome, will reappear, though in a less gigantic form, even in the bosom of Reformed and Protestant Churches. When the life of Christianity is thought to reside mainly in rubrics and outward ritual, these will be contended over at the sacrifice both of social peace and Christian love. The Civil Power will thus be greatly embarrassed, and union of the State with the Church become almost impossible, except as a tyrant or a slave. It was this spirit among the clergy, which mainly led to the suspension of the English Convocation, and, along with this, of the Church's power of internal self-government. Whenever it revives, it alienates the State from the Church, and the Church from the State, since all restraints on the clergy by the Civil Government come to be looked upon as an Egyptian bondage, or a sacrilegious usurpation.

In such a period of decay, equal danger will arise from the abuse and excess of popular liberty. This is one main element in the healthy constitution of a Christian State, and has been conspicuous in our own, but its exaggeration leads direct to social anarchy. The abuses of authority in former days are then turned into reasons for its total abrogation. The religious authority of civil rulers within the Church will, first of all, be set aside, and even loudly condemned. Every protest, wise or

unwise, once occasioned by specific acts of the Civil Power, will then be sunk in this total denial of all right whatever, on their part, to interfere. Church rule itself will follow the same course. The authority, first of bishops, then of synods of presbyters, then of separate pastors, will be set aside in the name of liberty; till the Visible Church resolves itself into a multitude of petty democracies, where every congregation rules over its own pastor by the power of the purse, and disclaims all authority whatever on the part of other Christians.

Three mighty influences are thus constantly at work, to destroy the balance of truth, order, and liberty, in a complex Christian State and Church like our own. Politicians will strive to degrade the Church into a mere tool of worldly policy, and transfer every great question, from an appeal to the Word of God and the commands of Christ, to the technicalities of human law, and the precedents of a bygone age. Ecclesiastical pride will chafe at all restraint, from the laws of an Established Church, on the supposed right of the clergy to the entire submission of the lay people, and will tend to shape and mould the national clergy on the model of the Romish priesthood. Others, in the name of freedom, will labour hard to break every link which binds Church and State together; blind to the fact that, when politics are wholly divorced from religion, the nation has plainly sold itself to the powers of darkness, and has cast off all allegiance to the Son of God. These evils may work a long time, before they approach to their natural issue. But when some crisis awakens the nation from its slumber, and quickens every school of thought within its bosom into new activity, then the extent of their

secret ravages will come to light. The open enemies of the constitution will be eager, zealous, clamorous, confident of success ; and its defenders weakened by internal strife, paralyzed by the practical evils that have grown up under abused privileges, dim-sighted, timorous, and hesitating in their own faith, when the sacred ark of God is risked in the open battle-field, and ready to fall into the hands of its bitter adversaries.

When these various evils have ripened in the Church, others in the State itself must follow. Instead of the faith of David and Hezekiah, the creed of Pilate and Gallio will then become popular in the high places of the land. The Word of God will be counted too obscure to be any guide whatever in State affairs. The old question, 'What is truth ?' will be asked once more, in the same mood of careless, contemptuous indifference. All creeds, because they exist and prevail, are then to be held equally reasonable ; equally foolish, perhaps, in the eye of some new philosophy, but at least socially on a level, and equally harmless in the sight of heaven. The highest aim of the Ruler, as of Pilate, is then to maintain peace at any price, and hinder a tumult from being made. Truth, however weighty, if it is found difficult to work, will be cast aside ; and its opposite error be embraced and developed, if statesmen find they can ride on the crest of the popular wave in no other way. The difference between the worship of a dead wafer and of the living God ; between the doctrine of holiness and love, and ceremonies and falsehoods that deceive the soul, and send it into eternity with a lie in its right hand ; becomes, as with Gallio, a question of words and names, and paltry religious disputes, which wise statesmen bow away



with smiles, or else sweep away with open contempt, from their august presence. The great error of rulers in former days is then held to be, not their ignorance of God's truth, but their attempt to ascertain it; not the delusion that they were doing God service in persecuting true Christians better than themselves, but the notion that they were bound to do Him any public service whatever. This delusion of ancient bigotry is now, with much complacency, and amidst the plaudits of newspapers, cast aside. Henceforth all religious questions are to be decided on purely political grounds. In other words, numbers are to be everything, truth nothing, because members of parliament, even the dullest, can read a census and count up votes; but in matters of faith and morals, amidst the endless divisions of the Church, it is hopeless to expect that they can know certainly what they ought to believe. All creeds doubtless exist, but it is full of doubt whether any of them is true; and therefore all ought to be equally flattered and favoured, only those the most which have the majority on their side, and the others, by rule of three, in proportion to their followers. All purpose to honour one above another must be disclaimed. To devote public funds to the spread of doctrines is henceforth to be no sign that we believe them. It is only a piece of sagacious flattery, a wise compliment paid by legislators, who have no faith in them, to subjects who have. Such maxims, when they prevail, and are the guides of statesmen, tend to destroy rapidly all faith in the Gospel, and all public reverence for God's holy name. Contempt for Divine truth, blindness to the moral dominion of God, a conscience seared to the guilt of helping on falsehoods we disbelieve or despise, an

expediency which, in the vain hope of pleasing men, fears not to violate the most solemn covenants, will then become the features of the national policy. Irreligious minds will then boast of their wisdom, when they disestablish the eternal truth of God; because they have learned to call it unjust that the State should seek to maintain the ascendancy of any truth over any one or all the countless varieties of error, delusion, and falsehood.

When the waters of a river approach some mighty cataract, they usually assume, for some distance above the fall, a strange and suspicious smoothness. The prophecies of peace and safety, the boastful promises of future unity with Ireland, and prosperity to the empire, from the policy of religious neutrality and irreligious spoliation now in progress, may remind thoughtful observers painfully of this phenomenon in the natural world. A democracy without creed, faith, or worship, of men who are ready to believe themselves self-developed monkeys or oysters, and think they can dispense with the living God in the whole course of their policy by the help of the addition-table, census-reports, and ballot-boxes alone, would be a strange and melancholy descent from the noble standing of our once Protestant and Christian empire. The consummation is in progress, but not yet complete. The shadow is gone down many degrees in the sundial of faithless and idolatrous Ahaz; but faith, zeal, and prayer, in those who know and love the truth, may stay its downward course, at least for a season, so that peace and truth may be given in our days. But if ever the change is complete, the judgments of God on a nation which has renounced His word, and abandoned its noble inheritance to

be His servant and witness to the ends of the earth, can hardly be long delayed. But one deep consolation remains. Should we fall through the blindness of our statesmen, and the sins of our people, there is sure to rise, phœnix-like, out of the ruin, some brighter display of those truths, which the Liberal movement would bury in oblivion; that nations stand by faith, and fall by unbelief, and that no people, tribe, or kingdom on the face of the earth, can rest securely on any other foundation than the rock of God's own everlasting covenant.

## CHAPTER IX.

## PRESENT DUTIES AND PROSPECTS.

THE main source of all the evils which now threaten our country is a wide-spread national unbelief of the Word of God. Science, taste, literature, political philosophy, are all ready, in various ways, to cast off their allegiance to our risen Lord and Master, who is the Word and the Wisdom of God. Religion then sinks into a matter of statistics and geography, of party strife and sectarian jealousy, instead of the deep, adoring reverence of sinful, but redeemed men, the heirs of immortality, in the presence of their Judge and Eternal King. Even Christians then accept the unworthy compromise, that faith may keep some little corner of thought to itself, and resign to the sway of that phantom, 'religious neutrality,' all the wide and various fields of scientific research and political activity. Statesmen will then go still further, and count the introduction of all religious questions into their counsels a disturbance and an intrusion. Religious strife will seem to them incurable, and hopeless of solution; and the most sacred truths, and the most trivial questions of form, to be alike the mere standards and watchwords of party strife and jealousy. Their noblest ideal of policy, in many cases, will be to restrain all excesses of religious zeal,

by immersing all creeds and churches alike in one impartial freezing mixture of civil patronage. Worldliness will overrun the Church. The power of things seen and temporal will increase, and men will forget more and more, in the stir of political debate and commercial activity, the stupendous grandeur of things unseen and eternal. How can the Christian foundations of our Constitution resist such mighty influences, confederate for its overthrow? A Reformed, Protestant, Evangelical, National Church, is a useless incumbrance, a gigantic anachronism, when faith in God himself is ready to expire, when majorities are everything, and God's truth is nothing, and the living power of the Gospel of Christ, and the first truths of religion, are dying away from multitudes throughout the land.

The French Revolution of 1789 marked the opening of a new era of Providence. Infidelity, bred out of the bowels of the Roman Church, like Death from Sin in Milton's allegory, began then to waste and assail its own parent. The Age of Reason, with its new reckoning that abolished the name of Christ, and its defiance of God by the national proclamation of Atheism, marked that God's hour of judgment on the long-lasting idolatries of Christendom had begun. The scourge was severe, and the hand of God was uplifted, in strange acts of judicial severity, over the nations of the earth.

The first stage of this judgment, however, was partial and incomplete. Our own country, amidst all the sins of its rulers and its people, still remained like a moral lighthouse, with its testimony to the name of God, and the authority of Christ as the King of kings, and its main-



tenance of the open Bible and the pure Gospel, in contrast to open unbelief and the superstitions of Rome. The French empire, born amidst the throes of a godless revolution, rose like a brilliant meteor, startled the world with its splendour, and then set in a sea of blood. But our Protestant empire, where true religion had revived, and missionary zeal had gained a new birth, came out victorious from the hard conflict; and the sword of our great general, like that of Othniel, Barak, or Gideon, gave peace to our land and to Europe for forty years.

The spirit of unbelief, though disheartened for a time, had never ceased to work on the Continent and throughout our own kingdom. But, having learned from past experience the strength of its rivals, its activity has been more disguised, and has taken new forms. The Papacy, also, in the new reprieve which has been given to it since the peace, has resumed fresh courage, and has cherished hopes, like the Edomites, of rebuilding its desolations, and recovering the ground it has lost. Blind faith, again, in the spirit of the age, by which too many sincere Christians are deceived, has turned multitudes, who ought naturally to be defenders of God's ark, into active and willing accomplices of the infidel movement. And now, after seventy or eighty years, we seem to be entering on a second and deeper stage of the same conflict, which begun to reveal itself at the close of the last century. It is no longer France, the central country of Europe, but Britain and Spain, the two political and moral extremes, the bulwark of Protestant truth, and the stronghold of Papal superstition, the land which has been raised to power and greatness by the open Bible, and the empire

that has sunk, through a cruel superstition, from supreme power into utter weakness, which take the lead in the present movement. Its forms are precisely opposite, but its presiding spirit in both is the same. Both alike are invited to cast aside a national faith, whether the Bible or the Breviary, toleration or intolerance, and to enrol themselves under the new standard of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and the sovereignty of the people. But it is a liberty which disdains the yoke of Christ, an equality which robs the Church of God, and treads underfoot His ordinances; and a fraternity of prodigals, who agree, by the major vote, that it is better to have their portion in this life, and to turn their backs on their Father's house and home.

The assault on the Irish Church is simply the crest of the immense tidewave of unbelief, which is sweeping over Christendom at the present hour. Our national testimony to the Word of God, and to the truths of the Reformation, is equally odious to the ultramontaniam of Rome, and to the fierce democracy of secularists and infidels. These two powers, elsewhere bitter and deadly foes, have suspended their internecine warfare, and are leagued in a momentary truce, to overthrow what each of them feels to be a stumbling-block and barrier in their path. This once removed, the Papacy looks forward, with sanguine hope, to the overthrow of the English Church, and the subjugation of our imperial race once more under the yoke of Rome. The unbelieving party, when a Bible-honouring Church has been overthrown, looks forward to an easier victory over that Romish superstition, which it despises in its heart, though it is content, just now, to use

it for an ally. Many sincere Christians, deceived by a false theory, and infected by the Laodicean, people-worshipping spirit of the last days, have joined this unholy league ; and think they are doing God service, when they conspire with all the Papal and Infidel leaders to destroy the Protestant and Christian constitution of this great empire, and help them zealously in their unhallowed task of rooting out the name of Christ from the laws and institutions of the land.

The first duty of those who know the truth, and understand the laws of national duty here unfolded, is to resist and oppose this great act of national declension and apostasy now in progress, even as they are bound to serve their heavenly Lord and Master, with all their heart and mind and soul and strength. It may be true that good will be brought out of the evil, if it succeeds ; that fresh supplies of faith and zeal may be given to the Irish Church in its hour of trial, and that the plans either of the Papal or the Infidel party may return on their own heads, by fresh triumphs of the Gospel, and new victories of truth and righteousness. The malice of Caiaphas, and the flippant question of Pilate, ‘What is truth?’ when they led to the crucifixion of our Lord, prepared the way for nobler victories of Divine truth and grace than had ever been attained before. But these results of God’s overruling wisdom did not make the sin less hateful, when the prisoner, condemned justly for sedition and murder, was set free to conciliate the populace, and He who is the Truth was given up instead to their wicked will. The condemnation is heavy and just, of all those who do evil that good may come. Those Christians, also, will not be innocent, who

fail to resist evil, or resist it with a lukewarm and indolent spirit, because they believe that, in some way or other, it will be overruled for good. Duties are ours, but events are God's. It may be that these strange confederates will succeed in tearing down the standard of our national Christianity, and setting up Pilate's maxim, 'What is truth?' the standard of religious neutrality, in its stead. It may be that God will purify His Church by the trial, that political degradation may be followed by double measures of spiritual strength; and that faith and zeal, like that of early days, may be given first to the Irish Church, and then, in due season, to English Churchmen also, so as to prepare the way for fresh victories of the Gospel. But these results, even should they be really in store for the Church, do not alter the solemn fact, that our Empire is casting behind it the Word of God and the truth of Christ, and committing itself in Ireland to a purely Infidel policy. There is here no room for selfish compromise on the part of those who know and love the truth of God. The Irish Church does well and wisely in refusing to be any party in this great national sin. Let it rest upon its authors alone. They are bound to protest, as they have protested, and as Nicodemus might have protested in the Jewish sanhedrim. It will be time enough, when the truth of God has been crucified anew, if such be the counsel and purpose of the Most High, for His disciples to consult on the new duties which may then arise; when God, in answer to the sins of our Parliament, shall have broken the staff, the symbol of His covenant with the British nation.

What are our prospects and our duties, in presence of

the great movement now in progress for the overthrow of the old foundations of our Christian State? Our immediate prospects are dark and threatening. Unless the spirit of deep slumber and delusion, which is now poured on so large a portion of the British people, shall be removed by some signal work of Divine grace, the downward progress of our nation is sure, at least for a generation to come. The uprooting of the Irish Church may be delayed, perhaps, for one or two sessions, though even this is doubtful; and its continued union with a Government, which is striving with all its might to despoil it, may seem to its earnest members a burden and incubus, rather than a gain, unless the eyes of the Government or of the nation are opened, and a healthier tone of thought is restored to politicians. But this year, or a little later, without some signal interference of God's hand, we may expect the change to be accomplished. The legislation will be final in this sense alone, that it will be the beginning of the end. In the name of religious equality, our Parliament will have effected the greatest of all anomalies. The Imperial Government, viewed in a religious light, will have become a Cerberus of three heads, Protestant and Episcopalian in England, Protestant and Presbyterian in Scotland, in Ireland nominally Neutral and Infidel, but practically subservient to the hierarchy of Rome. The Israelites of old were baptized to Moses in the cloud and the sea. When the pending bill has become law, an opposite phenomenon will occur; and the British executive and its officers, from the Lord Lieutenant downward, will be baptized into Comte and the Positive Philosophy in the waters of the Irish Channel. The Queen will be



bound by her Coronation Oath in England, but absolved from it in Ireland, by the will of the sovereign people. On this side of the Channel she will reign by the grace of God, and through the right secured by a Protestant succession. On the other side she will reign by the forbearance of the Fenians and Protestants to waive their differences, and make a joint demand for the repeal of the Union ; a compact the terms of which will have been set aside by the will of the stronger party, when the weaker has no remedy for the wrong but unheeded remonstrances alone.

These anomalies are too great to last. This 'final legislation' can only be a feeble instalment of further changes that must follow. Should no new rebellion in Ireland, when the disloyal have been quickened by hope into double zeal, and the loyal have been chilled into passive indifference, or even repelled into open advocacy of separation, disturb the smooth, onward flow of Parliamentary liberalism, another step in advance must soon follow, and the Kirk of Scotland be next overthrown. The ground will then be cleared for a step, in one sense really final, the disestablishment and disendowment of the English Church. It was said of the old Chaldeans, 'They shall deride every stronghold, for they shall heap dust, and take it.' The course of the modern Chaldeans will be the same. The dust of electoral and parliamentary majorities will be heaped up, in turn, against every religious institution of the land, which bears witness to the authority of Christ, and the supreme dominion of the King of kings. The decisive arguments will have been all prepared beforehand for the new campaign. English Churchmen, on careful statistical inquiry, will then be found to be in a probable minority in

Great Britain alone ; and still more when Ireland, now dis-united to suit the Liberal argument, is united in the reckoning once more, and the whole population is summed up in one common total, of which little more than one third will be found to be English Churchmen. The Irish Church, again, is homogeneous ; but the English Church is notoriously a house divided against itself, with three conflicting schools of thought in its own bosom, Ritualists, Rationalists, and disciples of the Reformation. If it is a great and fatal offence, in one case, not to have reclaimed the far more numerous body of Romanists, it is clearly a still greater fault, when tried by a popular standard, to have suffered one half of the population, when all were once members of the English Church, to slip away from its communion, and drift into open separation. The four main parties in the present league will remain united in the further movement—English and Irish Roman Catholics, the English Secularists and Infidels, the English Dissenters, and the Scotch Presbyterians and Free Churchmen. Some English Churchmen will then change sides ; and, after helping to overthrow their own Church in Ireland, will fancy that they can stay the course of events, when the same principles are consistently applied, by more zealous and clear-sighted parties to the present league, to England also. But they will have cut from under their own feet every principle on which resistance could be firmly based, and have left themselves no ground of opposition but selfish and sordid interest alone.

When this third stage of the movement shall arrive, which in a few years after the first, without some miracle of Divine mercy, it must do, the course of duty, even for sound

and earnest Protestant Churchmen, will no longer be plain. For the legal disestablishment of the Irish Branch of the United Church may justly be viewed as the moral disestablishment of the same Church in England also. When the State, by its supreme legislature, publicly adopts the principle of religious neutrality, and proclaims it alone to be right and just, so that the continuance of the English Establishment is made a question of statistics alone, the very basis of our National Constitution undergoes a vital change. Our national testimony to the truth of God, and to the great name of Christ, who is Prince of the kings of the earth, so far as one deliberate act of the legislature can do it, comes to an end. All that survives in its stead is a national testimony to the doubtful result of a gigantic addition sum, which affirms that Dissenters and Romarists are still outnumbered by English Churchmen. Should one or two millions of those who are now called Churchmen, but who practically neglect all worship, enrol themselves at the next census, after two years, as Recreative Religionists, this new foundation of the English Establishment, provided for us by the wisdom of our liberal statesmen, will have come to a speedy end. Meanwhile a grave question will have been raised at once in the minds of thoughtful Churchmen. That authority of the State within and over the Church, which constitutes a religious establishment, is based on the public submission of the State and its supreme legislature to the authority of Christ. Its Scriptural basis, laid down by the Church in Art. 37, and accepted by all its consistent members, is the authority ‘given always to all godly princes in Holy Scripture by God himself.’ But the legislature, which

lays down religious neutrality for its supreme law of justice, and claims to rule with no reference to the grace of God, but only by the sovereignty of the people, and the right of the greater number alone, cuts from under itself the moral ground of its own control within the Church of the living God. It lapses into the position of the heathen kings and emperors, when the Gospel first arose, and fought its way to supremacy in the Roman Empire. The control of such a legislature, in virtue of its new, self-assumed position, in every question of internal Church government, ceases to be a right, and becomes an usurpation. Its only real right, towards the Church, is to abandon claims which depend on its own public profession of allegiance to Christ and His Word, when this has been cast aside in deference to liberal theories. But it is not likely that statesmen, who are blind to the sin against Christ himself, will admit the forfeiture of their own rights of which they are guilty. Religious Neutrals, they will still claim the rights which belonged to them only as members of the Church, and disciples of that Master who has solemnly told them, 'He that is not for me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.' This truth, of the wholly altered relation between the English Church and the English State, if the latter sets up the law of neutrality in Ireland, and disowns the Church to secure its triumph, may dawn slowly on the minds of pious Churchmen themselves. But the fact is certain, the result a matter of moral demonstration. Events may retard or precipitate the discovery. But when the time for the third stage of revolution comes, it may be that those who oppose and detest the policy that

is now ready to triumph may be among the foremost to protest against the claim of a State, which has learned to act on infidel principles, to lay unholy hands on the ark of God, or to claim any right of internal control whatever over the English branch of that Church of the living God, which He has purchased with His own blood. A thousand Parliaments are only dust in the balance, compared with one jot or tittle of the rightful claims, to supreme reverence, of Him who is the Lord of lords and the King of kings.

Should the confederacy, now leagued for the overthrow of our National Christianity, prevail, and the Irish, Scotch, and English Churches, in succession, be deposed and politically disowned, what further prospects lie before us? Loosed from the control of the State, and the traditions of three centuries, one part of the Church will follow its own deepest instincts, and lose itself in the bosom of that Church of Rome, to which it longs already to be reunited, the mystic Babylon. The State, on the other hand, with its new creed of neutrality, will sink to the level of the Continental democracies, and take its place among the toes of the Great Image, the powers which fulfil the predicted features of the infidel confederacy of the last days. The immense military preparations of the Continent prove mournfully that the hour is not yet come, when nations shall not learn war any more, and seem to make inevitable some fearful crisis of bloodshed and violence, on the largest scale. But the national testimony to the name of God, which has lasted almost unbroken, for three thousand years, since the days of Egypt and the Exodus, will not be suffered to die out from the



earth through the unbelief or moral blindness of modern statesmen. Every step in the downfall of our own Church is likely to be followed by some work of mercy to God's ancient people, to prepare the way for the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, announced by prophets and apostles so long ago. The living Church, released from the restraints of State connexion, and from forced union with those whose hearts return to the spiritual Egypt of the Church of Rome, will grow in faith, love, and union, in the time of outward trial; and, mourning over the fall of that country, at least for a time, which God has honoured as the special ark of His truth, will yearn more and more for the fulfilment of His ancient promises, when Israel's recovery shall be life from the dead to a sin-distracted world. The moral conflict between true faith in the Word of God, and the allied powers of superstition and unbelief, may be most severe, and may perhaps last through one or two generations. But light will spring out of darkness. As the course of events removes the veil by which numbers are now deceived, and reveals the true character of the great liberal movement, tending, as it does and must do, more and more, to a deliberate and total rejection of the name and truth of Christ by once Christian lands, the Churchmen who are faithful to God's truth will be joined by others now arrayed against them. The Spirit of God will be poured out upon His people; and, though gross darkness may cover the nations, and the Positive Philosophy lap the world in thick shades of unbelief, there will be light at eventide to the true Church, the house of the living God; until at length, in

the midst of trouble and conflict, the day shall dawn, and the true Day-star shall appear.

What, then, are the duties which these solemn prospects impose upon all thoughtful Christians, and especially on Protestant Churchmen? The first is to oppose with all their might that sinful policy, now pursued by our liberal statesmen, which aims, under the watchword of religious neutrality, to banish the name of Christ from our national counsels. No conviction that God will overrule the evil for good, and perhaps revive His Church anew with His grace, when the State begins to disown it, should weaken our testimony against this guilty national rejection of the truth of God. To those who can see things in the light of God's word, it is a sin of the first magnitude, the sure precursor of heavy and sore judgments on the land. There is here no room for compromise. He that is not for Christ is against Him, and he that gathereth not with Him scattereth abroad. In this great crisis of our nation, and of the world's history, we need a revival of the faith, zeal, and single-heartedness, of the old prophets among the servants of the living God. Beneath the surface of political controversies, the gigantic issue is coming more and more to light, whether our great Empire, honoured and blessed so highly, ever since it received the full light of the open Bible and a recovered Gospel, is to stand by faith in Christ, or to fall by contempt for His word, and open or secret unbelief.

But a further duty, which devolves on faithful Churchmen, beside an earnest protest against national sin, and

the threatened breach of faith toward Irish Churchmen and Protestants, is increasing sympathy and union with those who are now appointed for a spoil and a prey. In the events which are now in progress, the Head of the Church calls loudly upon His servants in Ireland to consider their ways, and to confess and repent of their own shortcomings as a national Church, that they have not sought more earnestly and perseveringly to bring the light of the Gospel, and the doctrines of the Reformation, home to the hearts and consciences of their own countrymen. The task was very hard, and they might well shrink from its difficulties. Our liberal statesmen, who have vaulted into power by alliance with the Romish priesthood, are the last who have any right to cast a stone against them; but the sin is not less real in the sight of God. It may be that on this account mainly they are now caused to pass through the fires of affliction.

Our main duty as English Churchmen, next to a firm protest against national sin, is to deepen and confirm the links of love, which unite us to the Irish branch of our Church in its hour of especial trial. Our turn of trouble cannot be far distant, and proud, ignorant selfishness would be the worst preparation for our own share in the righteous chastisements of the God of love. Let us draw the bands closer which unite us to our brethren, who are ready to be dishonoured and divorced for their fidelity to Christ and his Gospel. Let us copy the bright example of Moses, who chose rather to share the afflictions of the people of God, than the splendours of State promotion in the foremost of worldly empires. Who can tell, even in darkest hours, what deliverances may still be wrought for the whole

Church of Christ, through the faith and zeal of British Christians in these last days? One truth is sure as the pillars of heaven that the reign of mere numbers, who despise and disown God's truth, is but for a moment. He whose name is the Truth, and whose followers, until now, have always been the minority in a sinful world, must and will reign for ever. The nation and kingdom that refuses to serve Him will perish; but out of its ashes there will grow up some new plant of renown, and some brighter unfolding of His victorious grace, who is and must ever remain Prince of the kings of the earth, and of whom it is written, 'He shall not fail nor be destroyed until He have set judgment in the earth, and THE ISLES SHALL WAIT FOR HIS LAW.'

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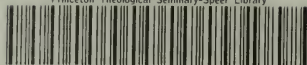
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